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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER ADVOCACY

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER ADVOCACY

by

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dedicated to jön and mackenzie

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER ADVOCACY

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This qualitative study explored teachers' perceptions of advocacy, specifically advocacy for themselves and other teachers. The major question that drove this study was: How do elementary classroom teachers perceive their ability to act as advocates to change their professional situations? Sub-questions included: How do teachers perceive union membership as an advocate outlet? To whom do teachers turn for support when they engage in advocate activities? What forces inhibit/encourage teachers to become advocates? Where do teachers learn to become advocates?

To explore these questions, a two phase study was conducted. Each phase consisted of a focus group of elementary teachers who met for six interview sessions.

Data each phase was first analyzed independently for insights into the views of each group of participants; then, cross-case analysis was conducted to explore the similarities and differences in the participants' stories and to compare these to relevant literature. Finally, these data were used as a site for theory generation about the topic of teacher advocacy.

The findings indicate that the teachers in this study exhibited ambivalence toward power and that this ambivalence directly affected the teachers' advocacy on behalf of themselves and other teachers. Three sub-themes support the overarching theme of ambivalence toward power: (1) power and resistance, (2) negotiating power, and (3) reluctance to access power. Additionally, it was found that the culture in which the teachers were located and the discourse of professionalism held a direct influence on the teachers' ambivalence toward power. It is important to note that the findings were not and should not be generalized beyond the participant groups (Flores & Alonso, 1995).

This study will make a significant contribution to the field of education. By sharing the stories and experiences of teachers concerning a topic yet to be explored in the educational literature, this study addresses a gap in such literature and also sheds light on previously hidden aspects of teachers' lives.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Teachers regularly act as advocates for students. Teachers assume a student advocacy role according to the needs that arise in their classroom, such as the academic needs of special education students (Jewett et al., 1998) or the social/emotional needs of children experiencing issues like divorce (Sammons & Lewis, 2000). Although teachers' advocacy work on behalf of students is well documented (Jewett et al., 1998; Quatroche, Bean, & Hamilton, 2001; Sammons & Lewis, 2000; Schnaiberg, 2001; Tappe & Galer-Unti, 2001), little has been written about teachers' advocacy on their own professional behalf. This study explored teachers' perceptions of advocacy, specifically advocacy for themselves and other teachers.

When I began this research, I had been working as an elementary or middle school teacher for seven years. In those seven years, I had been witness to many stories of and felt myself a pervasive sense of powerlessness among teachers to change their welfare (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988). As I began to research teachers and advocacy, I found little to no educational literature reporting stories of or documenting teacher advocacy. In fact, much of the literature I found reinforced the idea of teachers' lack of power to influence or change their professional situations (Acker, 1995; Benson & Malone, 1987; Isherwood & Hoy, 1973; Webb & Ashton, 1987). I, therefore, first approached this research with that perspective – that teachers

lack power. What I came to realize through the participants' stories, and the shared knowledge created in our focus groups, is that teachers do have and use power for themselves and other teachers, though their relationship with such power is often uneasy and inconsistent.

As someone who cares deeply about the welfare of both the children and the teachers in schools, who believes that the educational process works best in an environment that facilitates safety and growth for both of these parties, and who prepares preservice teachers to become a new generation of practicing teachers, I structured my research for this dissertation to find out more about teachers' perceptions of their ability to produce change in their professional welfare.

Research Design

This dissertation was a two phase study. The first phase took place in the spring of 2003. For this phase, I formed a focus group of five practicing teachers from Texas, including me, who met for six interview sessions to discuss ideas about and perceptions of teacher advocacy. Data from these focus groups comprise Phase I of the dissertation. Recurrent topics identified from this phase included the difference in the teachers' perceptions concerning the idea of teacher advocacy versus or in parallel with teacher activism, teacher unions, isolation and communication, generational changes, status, powerlessness, and rule breakers/rule followers.

Phase II of the dissertation took place in the spring of 2004. For this phase, I formed a focus group of three elementary teachers from Louisiana, plus me, who also met

for six interview sessions to discuss ideas about and perceptions of teacher advocacy. I utilized the recurrent topics from Phase I to guide my questioning of the Phase II teachers, but also encouraged the participants to explore and develop their own ideas about the topic. Recurrent topics from this phase included power in the job, power in unions, power in the decision to become a teacher, race, and isolation/communication.

For this dissertation, I first analyzed and interpreted the data from Phase I and II; next, I sought to combine and explore the connections, overlaps, parallels, divergences, and differences between and among the data. Utilizing this study, I hope to illuminate similar and disparate perceptions concerning, as well as powerful influences on teacher advocacy. Doing so may serve to initiate and support additional components in professional development and teacher education programs regarding advocacy issues or to simply raise awareness among study participants about advocacy matters. The lack of literature, as documented in Chapter Two, regarding teacher advocacy and/or teacher perception of such, suggests a need for research in this area.

The Researcher

Certainly who I am influences this dissertation, from the choice of topic to the questions I pursued with the focus groups to the themes I identified from the data. How I came to the profession of teaching and my experiences as a teacher are indelibly intertwined with this project; it is, therefore, important that I briefly share these professional and personal experiences. In doing so, I hope to identify for the reader biases that may influence this project.

Schultz, Crowder, and White (2001) write about the evolution of an individual's goal to become a teacher and identify four sources of influence on this goal – family, peer, teacher, and teaching experiences –and five types of influences that these sources provide – suggesting, encouraging, modeling, exposing, and discouraging. In addition, Schultz et al. (2001) also discuss "critical incidents," moments that "either affirm or change one's identity … [and] that have intense personal meaning in the life story of the person" and their goal to become a teacher (p. 305). My own experiences correlate with these influences and, for that reason, I will use the themes identified by Schultz et al. (2001) to frame my own journey to teaching and to explore the critical incidents that propelled me forward into teaching and this research.

Family, Peers, and Discouragement

Entering college on a steadfast pre-law track, I wound my way through several majors and exited as an elementary teacher. My decision to enter elementary education involved an influence that many other teachers have experienced and that I now often hear from my own preservice education students – discouragement from family and peers (Coeyman, 1998; Schultz et al., 2001). The choice to become a teacher was seen by most of my family and friends as "such a shame" and as a letdown, both for them and for me. I was "too smart to be a teacher" (Delisle, 1995; Schultz et al., 2001) and the loss of possible prestige and income was a heavy blow to my parents. It was assumed by many that I had decided to forego a career and instead wanted to become a wife and mother, as teaching was seen as "women's work" (Acker, 1995; Apple, 1985; Feiman-Nemser &

Floden, 1986; Hargreaves, A., 1994). What had really occurred were two things: I decided I did not want the working life of a lawyer and I believed, as others, that I could have a greater positive impact on the world as a teacher (Coeyman, 1998; Marchant, 2000; Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003; Schultz et al., 2001).

This critical incidence – receiving discouragement from family and peers for the first time – was disturbing, to say the least. Careful thought revealed to me that although my decision to become a teacher changed many things, it had not changed my abilities; I was still the intelligent, capable person that was previously going to become a lawyer. My cognizance of this fact coupled with the negative reactions from family and friends concerning teaching as a profession produced in me defiance. I was shocked and angered that people who viewed me as smart and competent could continue to view my career choice as less than other professions. Therefore, my decision to become a teacher did not compel me to reduce myself to the low status of teaching (Gannerud, 2001; McPherson, 1981; Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

Because the public view of teachers has changed little in recent history (McPherson, 1981), I have continued to harbor this defiance. Although the initial reactions of my family and friends have been, for the most part, replaced by respect and admiration at my progress through my career and, probably more, my attainment of a master's degree and pursuit of a doctorate, I continue to experience negative views of teaching on a regular basis; as Tye and O'Brien (2002) note, "Ask what happens at a social gathering when they [teachers] reply to the question 'And what do you do?'" (p. 30). Personally, my response to this question has been met by remarks that reflect the

public's generally low view of teachers (Gannerud, 2001; McPherson, 1981; Tye & O'Brien).

It is no stretch to make a connection between my feelings of defiance and my interest in a research topic that explores issues of power and teachers. I recognize and acknowledge that the negative experiences I have encountered and feelings I harbor from these experiences prompt me to approach my topic from a perspective of teacher powerlessness, to be drawn to literature that reports this powerlessness, and to view my topic as an anomaly. This is not necessarily reality, nor is it the reality that I seek for this project. It is a stretch, but an important one and a possible one, for me to view teachers as powerful, to ferret out literature that confirms teacher agency, and to view my topic as a new addition to a growing body of literature.

Teachers, Modeling, and Encouraging

Like many teachers, my decision to pursue education was influenced by other teachers (Delisle, 1995; Schultz et al., 2001). In the teacher education program from which I graduated, I was inspired through modeling and encouragement from several professors who were themselves former elementary teachers. These professors were intelligent and knowledgeable of the field, they exuded a satisfaction and happiness with their choice of careers, and they shared with me their confidence in my ability to bring something good, something special, to the field of education. These individuals viewed teaching as a profession (Acker, 1987) and sought students who viewed themselves as possible professionals. To attract and recruit such students, this education department

formulated and maintained rigorous standards and entrance requirements, a contrast to "the general agreement in the US that current admission standards for entrance to the elementary education major tend to be both lax and inappropriate" and "attract a wide range of less qualified students" (Papanastasiou & Papanastasiou, 1997, p. 306).

The professors I had also believed in teaching as a form of social change (Smulyan, 2004). To encourage the growth of this idea in preservice teachers, this education department built its courses around four themes: diversity, empowerment, reflection, and collaboration. These themes were incorporated into every education course and each assignment. The ideas of teaching as a profession (Acker, 1987) and as a political act (Reid, McGallum, & Dobbins, 1998; Smulyan, 2004) resonated with me. I utilized these ideas and themes throughout my career to facilitate my own growth as an informed and effective educator; I continue to explore these ideas with my own preservice teachers and in my research.

Teaching Experiences

Undoubtedly all of my teaching experiences have helped to shape my professional and personal identity; however, there are two critical incidents that I believe relate to this research. The first of these concerns teacher unions.

As a student teacher, before I could enter the classroom I was required to join a teacher union for liability protection (National Education Association, 2004); once I became a teacher, it was standard practice in the region in which I worked for teachers to join the union. In this state, the unions enjoy collective bargaining rights (Education

Commission of the States, 2004; Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes, 2004) and routinely advocate for teachers through actions such as holding meetings on school campuses to keep teachers informed of news and events, providing professional development training, lobbying at local school boards and the state legislature, and bargaining each year for salary increases and other benefits (Education Minnesota, 2004). As an inexperienced teacher, I thought that the situation in which I found myself was standard practice across the country. I attended campus and district union meetings and when the union voted to strike if our contract was not settled, I was ready to walk. Though the strike never came to be, I had been initiated into the teaching profession with a belief that teachers have rights, that unions stand up for those rights, and that part of my responsibility as a professional educator was to support the union through money and action. It would take five years and a move across the country for me to realize that not all educators believed this or believed in the practices in which I had routinely and naively engaged.

The second critical incident occurred in my eighth year of teaching. I had been married several years and my husband and I were ready to start a family; however, I wanted to continue teaching and we needed the income. In searching for a way to balance family and work, I came across the idea of job sharing, "two or more teachers sharing the responsibility for one teaching assignment" (Moorman, Smith, & Ruggels, 1981, p. 11). Originally introduced into the field of education in the 1970s "to reduce the impact of teacher layoffs and to open new jobs for teachers" (Eick, 2002, p. 890), teacher job sharing resurfaced for two reasons: school districts and states hoped to fill their

thousands of teacher vacancies with qualified teachers who had left the profession to raise families or because of burnout (Blair, 2003a) or, as was my situation, school districts and states hoped to keep qualified teachers who were starting a family (Blair, 2003).

That year, after learning that my school district did not currently permit job sharing, I ventured forth before my campus leadership team with a proposal for the district to allow job sharing. My proposal was approved immediately and I moved forward to the district leadership team, where my proposal still sits. At each job sharing presentation, I encountered teachers who enthusiastically supported my proposal and who wanted to make it happen, but did not know how. Although, at the time, I worked in an award winning school district with quality teachers, many of whom held masters degree and some of whom held doctorates, I had no models for the leadership steps I took and no allies who knew the next steps to take. In fact, while my teacher colleagues valued my efforts and held my advocacy actions in high regard, they also considered me somewhat of an oddity, a rebel, an anomaly.

This critical incidence provided the final thrust into this project. In becoming a teacher advocate myself, I realized that, although my efforts were not successful, the possibility for success was present and that teachers do have access to power. In my own situation, neither I, nor the other teachers I encountered, knew how to utilize the power we needed to make a change in our professional circumstances. I wondered, though, in what circumstances do teachers feel they can and choose to use power? For whom and what purposes do they choose to utilize power? And when and where do they learn how

to employ this power? These initial questions have evolved over several years and directly led to this dissertation.

Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Advocacy and Activism

In the first focus group meeting for both phases, I asked the teachers for definitions of the words advocacy and activism. As I explained to the participants, I chose to ask about both of these words because although my first research topic was "teacher activism," I found very little literature that utilized the term "activism" and more literature that utilized the term "advocate." I further asked the teachers what connotation each word had for them and how they saw themselves as advocates or activists in their personal and professional lives. As each individual teacher presented her own ideas about these words, both groups fashioned shared meanings of each term. It became apparent that all of the teachers equated both advocacy and activism with power; however, the teachers held different perceptions of the two concepts, advocacy and activism. Further, although the definitions and ideas created by the two focus groups held similarities, each group crafted a unique view and understanding of both advocacy and activism; therefore, I present the perspectives of each focus group separately.

Phase I Teachers

The teachers in Phase I quickly separated the terms advocacy and activism. Bev was the first to speak and said, "I see them as two different things. I just don't know exactly why" (2003, Interview 1, Line 17). As the teachers verbally formulated their

individual definitions of the words, they decided that advocacy was primarily exercising power on behalf of students. Jill stated, "I think of advocacy as you're a child advocate; you're helping the kids and you're promoting the best for them" (2003, Int. 1, 35-37). This statement correlates with the literature concerning teachers' advocacy actions; it is common and accepted for teachers to advocate for student needs (Nias, 1989), including their academic (Jewett et al., 1998), social/emotional (Sammons & Lewis, 2000), and physical needs (Tappe & Galer-Unti, 2001). The teachers in Phase I described efforts related to all of these areas. For example, the Kindergarten teaching team of which Carol and Jill were members, aggressively lobbied their principal to alter a proposed schedule. Carol stated, "We came at him [principal] hard with our schedule change because we just didn't feel it [the proposed schedule] was appropriate for kids" (2003, Int. 4, 125-126).

The teachers spoke with ease about utilizing power for their students. "I feel very comfortable in the advocacy role," Carol stated (2003, Int. 1, 181). It was apparent that the teachers accepted this role as part of their job. Advocating for students has been related to caring about children and the "maternal imagery" (Acker, 1995, p. 23) of teaching. Nias (1989) reports that teachers who describe themselves as such "caring" teachers feel they must place the children's needs above their own interests; referring to work by Walkerdine (1981, 1986), Acker (1995) writes that such an approach has been described "as a trap for women" in that "it privileges the child over the teacher" (p. 23). That this was a possibility became apparent in the teachers' struggle to apply ideas about advocacy to the welfare of teachers.

When I asked about advocacy for teachers, the women were vague in their answers. They described advocacy for teachers as "supporting teachers" (Bev, 2003, Int. 1, 21) and "being an ambassador for our profession" (Carol, 2003, Int. 1, 45), but they seemed truly unsure of what the concept meant to them. In contrast to their ease and confidence in discussing advocacy for students, it appeared that exercising power for themselves and other teachers was a new and grey area for the women. Though the teachers were clearly diffident in their discussion of teacher advocacy, it was unclear at the time to both the participants and me why this was a difficult concept. I could not deduce from their initial attempts at defining teacher advocacy whether the teachers were privileging students over themselves as proposed by Walkerdine (1981, 1986) or whether other factors, such as aspects of the culture of teaching, were responsible for the teachers' unawareness of this concept. Therefore, in subsequent interview questions and group meetings, I pursued the topic of teacher advocacy in the hopes of developing this concept further. As we discussed teacher advocacy, the women began to associate power used by and for teachers with what they initially termed activism. Their reasons for doing so are clearly tied to their definition of activism.

The teachers first and foremost felt that activism was power exercised on behalf of teachers. Carol stated, "Activism means that in some kind of political way, you're trying to advance the profession by lobbying or meeting with legislators to help you get things passed that would help our career, our field" (2003, Int. 1, 42-44). All of the teachers agreed that activism involved stepping into the political realm and all of the women, except Maureen, were hesitant to label themselves as activists. Jill stated, "I'm

not comfortable in the political scene of activism and I don't know why not. I have a long history of family being very involved in politics…I just never have" (2003, Int. 1, 344-346). Jill's discomfort with the political aspect of activism rang true for Bev and Carol and pointed to a possible cause for the scarcity of the term activism in the literature. As the study progressed, the teachers began to utilize the term advocacy to describe power they had utilized on behalf of themselves and other teachers. Because most of them were "less comfortable being an activist" (Carol, 2003, Int. 1, 187) than an advocate, being under the safe umbrella of "advocacy" allowed them to not only identify and label actions they had taken in the past on behalf of themselves and other teachers as advocacy, but also to experiment with what they previously thought of as activist actions.

The women in Phase II also discussed and defined the terms advocacy and activism during their first focus group meeting. Their ideas shared some similarities with the women of Phase I, but also presented some differences.

Phase II Teachers

The teachers in Phase II felt that advocacy and activism were two separate, but related concepts. Diane believed that "advocacy is standing up for one another and particularly someone that is in your same boat" (2004, Int. 4, 37-38). This definition set the stage for how this focus group viewed advocacy and made it possible for the women to feel that advocacy was equally important and possible for both students and teachers. In a striking departure from the Phase I teachers, Diane further stated that advocacy by teachers

> would go across the board. They would certainly be an advocate for each other, for fellow teachers. They would certainly be advocates for their schools. They would certainly be advocates for their students. I would think you would have to really be open and broad-minded and be ready to pursue pertinent issues that related to you or your school or your kids (2004, Int. 4, 235-238).

Although the women in Phase II spoke with more ease about teacher advocacy, their examples of teacher advocacy were somewhat vague and fit into Bev's previous definition of "supporting teachers" (2003, Int. 1, 21). For example, Diane described teachers being advocates for each other by sharing the load of school duties and students with behavior problems (2004, Int. 4). And Leslie went on to point out, "I would say we are most probably advocates for our students and we probably need more advocates for ourselves. Especially like the three of us being new to the system, we know a lot less than the teachers that have been there for a while" (2004, Int.4, 294-297). Sara agreed stating that advocacy by teachers is "mostly for the students" (2004, Int. 4, 335).

As the teachers from Phase I, the women in Phase II were able to list ways in which they exercised power for their students. Leslie described efforts on behalf of students with "behavior problems and speech problems and disorder problems" and noted "all the conferences that we set and what we do to help the kids" (2004, Int. 4, 282-283). It seemed clear from initial discussions that these teachers automatically put student needs before their own interests (Walkerdine, 1981, 1986), for although they felt it was possible to exercise power for teachers, they believed that as teachers "you *have* to be an

advocate for your kids" (Diane, 2004, Int. 4, 268-269). Interestingly, these teachers perceived boundaries in their efforts for the students. Sara described, "With the students, I find that there is still a limit in helping a child" (2004, Int. 4, 336). These perceived boundaries were most strongly connected to the climate of the school – what was accepted by other teachers, administrators, and parents – and could be partially attributed to the fact that these teachers were new to their schools. An additional factor in why these teachers perceived boundaries to their advocacy efforts lay in their definition of activism.

The women initially described activism as the action individuals take on behalf of advocacy issues (2004, Int. 4); however, they added that "sometimes activism has somewhat of a negative connotation…that it might be people who are a little more on the extreme" (Diane, 2004, Int. 4, 38-40). All of the teachers in Phase II agreed with this statement. Indicating why they were uncomfortable with this connotation, Sara stated, "Nobody wants to be seen as an extremist" (2004, Int. 4, 62). The idea of teacher as "political actor" (2004, Int. 6) or as radical was unnerving to these teachers; this image simply does not fit into the imagery of "loving and caring about children" so often associated with teachers (Acker, 1995, p. 23). The teachers' feelings about activism and the fact that they directly related activism and advocacy certainly carried consequences for any possibility of the teachers accessing or exercising power on behalf of students, themselves, and other teachers. This became more apparent as, in future meetings, the teachers in Phase II demonstrated their reluctance to identify and exercise power. Details are further explored throughout the themes in this dissertation.

Research Questions and Themes

The initial discussions of advocacy and activism and the shared meanings that the teachers developed for these concepts were central to the teachers being able to explore the major research question driving the study: How do elementary classroom teachers perceive their ability to act as advocates to change their professional situations? Because each group developed a collective understanding and common language around the concepts of advocacy and activism, there was little misunderstanding, mislabeling, or fear throughout the process of exploring the study topics. The women found a common ground in their initial meetings and from there were able to openly explore both the major research question and the sub-questions of the study: How do teachers perceive union membership as an advocacy outlet? To whom do teachers turn for support when they engage in advocacy activities? What forces inhibit/encourage teachers to become advocates? Where do teachers learn to become advocates?

The focus groups did not explore these topics sequentially, nor did they explore these topics exclusively and, though the teachers and I utilized the research questions to guide our discussions, it became apparent that the questions were not entirely relevant to their values or experiences. Additionally, the teachers shared their own ideas and topics that they felt were related to the study, such as their experiences in becoming teachers, and we explored these as well. Through these discussions, I identified the major theme of this dissertation, "Ambivalence to Power."

Over and over, the teachers in this study exhibited ambivalence toward power through their stories, perceptions, actions, and inactions. Although at times, the teachers

clearly acknowledged and exercised power for themselves and other teachers, they did not consistently access or utilize power and, in some instances, they were reluctant to access power and even resisted some forms of power. The teachers in this study clearly demonstrated an uneasy and inconsistent relationship with power, which directly affected their advocacy, or use of power, on behalf of themselves and other teachers. The teachers' overarching ambivalence toward power was illustrated by the confluence of the three sub-themes of this dissertation.

The first sub-theme, "Power and Resistance," demonstrates the teachers' acknowledgement and exercise of power through two categories, "Becoming Teachers" and "Covert Power." The first indication I received of the teachers' use of power was through their stories of becoming teachers, stories which, I was surprised to find, were similar within and across both focus groups. As teachers, the women continued to utilized power and resistance, but in a different form. I labeled this power "covert" because the teachers often hid this power from other non-teacher adults.

The second sub-theme, "Negotiation Power," illustrates the teachers' active instigation of negotiations in order to exert, garner, or combine power with those individuals they viewed as more powerful. The women in this study most often negotiated power with their principals, and, thus, this sub-theme is supported by a sole category, "Power and Principals."

The third sub-theme, "Reluctance to Access Power," illustrates the teachers' resistance to possible sources or forms of power through two categories, "Unions" and "Personal Benefit." Although most of the teachers in this study believed that unions held

the greatest power potential for teachers, they had little knowledge of unions, held wavering perceptions of unions, and exhibited reluctance to utilize this power. Furthermore, the teachers exhibited resistance to power without perceived personal benefit.

The major theme and supporting sub-themes of this study are important for two reasons. First, all of the themes were derived from the participants' words (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Nias, 1989). In some instances, the teachers actually discussed the theme specifically. For example, the teachers directly discussed the power they exercised as teachers. In other cases, the teachers discussed related issues, experiences, and situations, which I then grouped together and labeled as a theme. This is the case with the sub-theme "Reluctance to Access Power," an idea which is apparent in the teachers' initial conversations about advocacy and activism, discussed above. As stated previously, there were other topics that I identified from the teachers' discussions; however, the major theme and supporting sub-themes that I have chosen were based on topics that the teachers repeatedly discussed in several focus groups, rather than just mentioning once or twice or discussing at only one meeting.

Second, I believe these themes address a gap in the educational literature and a hidden aspect of teachers' lives. As the focus group meetings progressed for each phase, I realized that I could easily focus on the powerlessness and isolation described by the teachers and well documented in the literature (Acker, 1995, 1987; Lortie, 1975). This would be very comfortable for the general public, and even teachers, as it is a pervasive perception of teachers, and convenient for me, as I would have little searching to do to

support my study. However, as I continually reflected upon the teachers' words, their passion and persistence, and their yearning to illuminate not only the difficult, dark spots, but also the stimulating, positive aspects of the occupation, I realized that I had been provided a different story to share. Therefore, I have chosen to first and foremost focus on the abilities of teachers, their awareness of their professional situations, and the often effective and appropriate responses they use in response to their situations. I am well aware that with these goals in mind, I could write a hero or victory narrative (Cary, 1999). It is for this reason that I pay particular attention to the teachers' opposition to power, advocacy, and activism, as well as search for and illuminate contradictions within each theme. Of course, this makes the findings appear somewhat convoluted at times, but that is the reality of teachers' lives.

This dissertation is structured in five chapters. Chapter One briefly introduces the research design, researcher, research questions, dissertation major theme and sub-themes, and dissertation structure. Chapter Two provides a literature review related to four areas: the culture of teaching, teacher power, teachers as advocates for students, and teacher unions. These topics provide a broad view of the occupational factors that may affect teacher power and advocacy, as well as specific instances in which teachers exercise power, mainly for their students. Chapter Three examines the methodology of the dissertation and provides detailed descriptions of the research design, data collection techniques, data analysis and interpretation methods, and methodological limitations of the study. Chapters Four presents the major theme and sub-themes of the study, including five categories of supporting data, related literature, and discussion of the

findings. Chapter Five presents a review of the findings, significance and implications of the study, limitations of the findings, and suggestions for future research.

I present this dissertation in an effort to shed light on an area of teachers' lives that has yet to receive attention, but that appears to be important to teachers as individuals and professionals. It is my belief that this study can add dimension to the growing body of research interested in "the subjective reality of teachers from the standpoint of, or in the words of, teachers themselves" (Nias, 1989, p. 19). It is my hope that other teachers can utilize this study to reflect upon their own ideals and practices, finding support in the shared experiences and strength in the individual hopes.

Throughout the dissertation, I discuss the teachers collectively and also separately by phases. This presentation of constant shifting between wide and telescopic lens is untidy. I feel, however, that this method best represents the data, and more importantly the teachers. For, as discussed in Chapter Two, there is both a broad and narrow culture that teachers inhabit; there are shared experiences and stark contrasts; there are common ideas and different beliefs. To present my data as clean and unencumbered would be misleading and would be of no use to the teachers or to the field of education. I feel that if we, as teachers, desire society to view teachers and the education field as multi-dimensional and to accept that there is no one perspective or view that will propel education forward in the "right" direction, then we must first see this picture and accept these ideas. I make a concerted effort in this dissertation to present such a multi-dimensional view of both teachers and the field of education.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I present a literature review of four topics: the culture of teaching, teacher power, teachers as advocates for students, and teacher unions. I chose to review the literature on these four topics because together they provide both a broad view of the professional situation of teachers, including factors that may affect teachers' power and advocacy, and specific instances in which teachers exercise power as advocates for others and for themselves.

The Culture of Teaching

One simply cannot explore a topic about teachers without recognizing the culture, the teacher culture, in which these individuals are located. Broadly viewed, culture is a "meaningful system of beliefs and practices" (Lubeck, 1985, p. 13). Specifically, teacher culture is the "beliefs, values, habits and assumed ways of doing things among communities of teachers" (Hargreaves, A., 1994, p. 165). In a field as expansive as elementary teaching, can there be just one culture? Researchers have explored this question for decades (Acker, 1990; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Hargreaves, A., 1994; Sachs & Smith, 1988). Acker (1990) asserts that the occupation of teaching, "or segments of it such as primary teaching," does share common beliefs and practices, such

as “how children should be treated or childhood understood” (p. 261). Freedman, Jackson, and Boles (1983) concur and write,

> The work situation of elementary teachers intrinsically creates a culture whose aspects are overwhelmingly shared by all the teachers at this level, no matter what their present teaching situation or what background they have brought to teaching. Every one of us shares basic concerns and problems (p. 261).

Acker (1990), however, goes on to indicate that there is also institutional, or organizational, culture that varies from school to school and A. Hargreaves (1994) supports this idea, writing, “Culture carries the community’s historically generated and collectively shared solutions to its new and inexperienced membership” (p. 165).

For the purpose of this study, I began with a broader view and identified elements of the occupational culture that may affect all teachers. Several common aspects of the occupational culture which are significant are discussed below. Within these broad elements, I also identify specific characteristics of the local culture and provide similarities and differences between the states and districts in which the study participants were located.

The first of these is isolation, an aspect of the occupational culture of teachers that is well-documented (Acker, 1995, 1987; Hargreaves, A., 1994; Lortie, 1975; Mac An Ghaill, 1992; Sachs & Smith, 1988; Waller, 1932). The isolation of most elementary teachers is at once created by the physical architecture and daily schedule of their schools (Acker, 1995). Most elementary schools are composed of “egg-crate architecture” (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986, p. 516) with one class and one teacher to a room. The

elementary teacher spends most of the day in this room with the same children, often devoid of interaction with other adults (Hargreaves, A., 1994). The daily schedule reinforces this isolation as elementary teachers are often responsible for not only teaching all core academic subjects in their classroom, but also covering "duties," such as supervising lunch or recess; this schedule leaves little, if any, time to connect with colleagues (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). Such physical isolation reinforces the individualism of the profession.

Termed a "norm" (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986, p. 517), a "cult" (Hargreaves, D., 1980, p. 187), and a "heresy" (Hargreaves, A., 1994, p. 163), the individualism of teachers is explored and explained through two contrasting ideas: that individualism is imposed upon teachers and that individualism is maintained by teachers. Individualism is imposed by the "literal physical separation from other adults" (Acker, 1995, p. 30) discussed previously and also by the bureaucracy of education which expects teachers to implement pre-packaged curriculum (Acker, 1990) and solve classroom problems with little to no collaboration or help from colleagues or administrators (Fieman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). For example, in both Texas and Louisiana, teachers are expected to follow a highly structured curriculum (Louisiana Department of Education, 2004; Texas Education Agency, 2003b) in order to prepare students for state standardized tests (Louisiana Department of Education, 2004; Texas Education Agency, 2004). This curriculum is generalized to all students and is considerable enough that it allows little room for modification or inclusion of other topics which a teacher may deem beneficial to a specific group of students. It is imperative that teachers implement these curricula so

that students are assured of passing state tests, but also because their schools will be rated according to student test scores. Such ratings are published locally (The Times, 2002) as well as nationally (Education Week, 2004) and schools that meet or exceed certain ratings are often given additional funding (Pea, 2001). Factors such as these would also lead teachers to desire isolation.

Individualism is maintained by teachers because it brings them privacy (Hargreaves, A., 1994) and a large measure of control over what is and is not taught in their classrooms (Acker, 1995); however, preserving such individualism also produces problems for teachers. Teachers have been described as "hiding" behind closed doors or "retreating into their classrooms" (Acker, 1995, p. 30) to prevent the implementation of new policies. Such individualism can also lead to social isolation (Acker, 1995: Lortie, 1975), which deprives teachers of "collegial interaction – support and praise for work well done, stimulation of new ideas" (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986, p. 511). It is impossible to pinpoint one cause of teacher isolation; the reality is that teachers must or choose to go it alone.

Another significant aspect of teacher culture is gender. The elementary teaching force has been and continues to be composed primarily of women (Acker, 1987; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). In Texas, females compose 77% of the teaching force, while 82% of teachers in the district in which the Texas phase of the study took place are female (Texas Education Agency, 2003). In Louisiana, 82% of teachers are female in both the state and district in which study participants taught (Louisiana Department of Education, 2002). The profession is generally thought of as

"women's work" (Acker, 1995; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Hargreaves, A., 1994) occupied by less than capable individuals (Acker, 1987; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986). Women who choose to enter the field of education often hear comments such as, "You're capable, you should do more than teach. Women should refuse to be exploited in low-paying women's work" (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 247). Interestingly enough, Kaufman and McDonald (1995) found that although many of their female education students had experienced the same reaction described above, male education students "noted they were perceived as 'heroes'" (p. 48).

The gender of elementary teaching creates problematic norms for teachers. For example, elementary teachers have been compared to mothers as they both spend the majority of time with "their children" (Grumet, 1988, p. 85); this commonality leads to the shared expectations of "altruism, self-abnegation, and repetitive labour" (Grumet, 1988, p. 87). Elementary teachers reinforce this norm when they assume a maternal role exhibiting self-sacrifice (Acker, 1995) and declaring "concern, affection, even love for their pupils" (Hargreaves, A., 1994, p. 145).

Related to this selfless ideal is another norm that has been linked to the entrance of women into the field of teaching: low pay (Acker, 1987). In both Texas and Louisiana, teacher pay is well below the national average (Education Week, 2004). The minimum state starting salary in Texas is $24,240 with a college degree (Texas Education Agency, 2003a); in Louisiana, individuals who have completed two years of college, but lack a degree, may be hired to teach at a state starting salary of $11,095, while college graduates begin at $14,631 (Louisiana Department of Education, 2003b). Locally, the

two districts where study participants taught have more comparable salaries, with the Texas teachers starting $32,150 (Eanes Independent School District, 2003) and the Louisiana teachers starting at $30,380 (Louisiana Department of Education, 2003). Moreover, teachers, predominantly women, are managed by administrators who are predominantly men (Hargreaves, A., 1994); teachers receive less pay than their administrators (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Gender and low pay are then intricately interconnected and further the cultural perception of teaching as low status job, rather than a profession (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986).

None of these components of teacher culture exist in isolation, nor are they linear in which one causes the next. Rather, they are tightly woven together in a history and present situation of perceived and real powerlessness (Acker, 1987; Hargreaves, A., 1994). For example, Acker (1995) writes of teachers using isolation "as a response to their lack of power to influence school or district policies" (p. 30). The idea of power is a real contradiction for teachers, who "are told they are powerful influences on the nation's future, yet at the same time awarded low status, low autonomy, and treated as incompetent" (Acker, 1987, p. 96). Additional exploration of the literature related to teacher power further illuminates these contradictions and sheds light on how this literature, and the images and ideas presented therein, influences the relationship between teachers and power.

Teacher Power

In educational literature, power is most often defined as the ability to do something (Hall, 1994; Spielmann & Radnofsky, 1997) and concerns access to resources and the capability to influence or empower others (Hall, 1994). The teachers in this study focused almost exclusively on power as "being able to do" (Spielmann & Radnofsky, 1997, p. 3) and, therefore, that is the definition utilized in this dissertation; however, the majority of literature rarely comments on teachers having this sort of power. In fact, the concept of teacher power is almost impalpable and appears to be built on paradoxes. From the literature and from the participants' own words, it appears that teachers continually manage shifts between power and powerlessness. Teachers receive conflicting messages about their power and have contradictory experiences with power; these conflicting messages and experiences set the stage for and reinforce teachers' ambivalence about power.

Terrien (1955) points to the major source of paradox concerning teachers' power: status. He writes that teachers'

> status, or 'position with relation to the total of society,' remains unresolved…The status of teachers is somewhere on a continuum. At one end, they are the cultural surrogates, and as such have 'power' in the primitive sense of the word. They operate in the realm of thought, where they cannot be controlled – hence they are to be suspected and feared. At the other end of the continuum they are the housewives of the culture – the ones concerned with maintenance and continuity, and hence the conservators. They have the role often assigned in primitive

> societies to old men, the aged and the infirm – that of trainers of children. But most of all, they are the sanctioning agents for the young, the guardians of morals, the arbiters of conduct, and it is in this status that they are remembered by adults from their own childhood. In truth, teachers constitute a kind of conscience in society, and their status is that of conscience – recognized as fundamentally important, but neglected as much as possible (p. 20).

On the one hand, teachers have "the power of one on whom the stability of society somehow depends" (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 246). In this, teachers are bestowed a status of importance for it is their charge to instill in their students the concepts, values, and ideals perceived as necessary for the replication of our democratic society. However, this power seems illusive taking into consideration two factors.

First, although teachers are expected to adhere to the democratic concepts, values, and ideals that they teach their children, other adults often do not (Lightfoot, 1983). This sets up a false, even satirical relationship between teachers and this power. Second, the generally accepted low status of teachers in society (Acker, 1987; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Lightfoot, 1983; Lortie, 1975; Webb & Ashton, 1987) contradicts the idea of teacher power. Such dichotomies lead to anger and frustration for many teachers (Acker, 1987), feelings that may certainly influence teachers' ambivalence about their own status and power.

The literature is replete with discussions of the low status and powerlessness of teachers (Acker, 1995; Benson & Malone, 1987; Isherwood & Hoy, 1973; Webb & Ashton, 1987). Several themes related to teacher powerlessness presented in the

literature were also cited by the teachers in this study. These include the relationship between the low salaries of teachers and their low status (Acker, 1987; Gannerud, 2001; Papanastasiou & Papanastasiou, 1997); the perceived correlation between teachers' abilities and their work with children (Delisle, 1995; Lightfoot, 1983); and the public speculation that the higher education required for teachers is inferior to other college degree programs (Papanastasiou & Papanastasiou, 1997). That the teachers were not only aware of these issues, but also had personal experiences with them provided further basis for the teachers' ambivalence about power.

The previously mentioned topics cited by the women are not the only reasons presented in the literature for the low status and powerlessness of teachers. Other important ideas are put forth in the literature, such as the relationship between the female gender of most primary teachers and powerlessness (Acker, 1995, 1987; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986) and the historical situation of teachers and their lack of power (Acker, 1987; Donley, 1977; Lightfoot, 1983; Lortie, 1975); however, the teachers in this study did not raise these issues, nor did they pursue them when raised.

From the literature previously discussed, it appears that teachers are inundated with images of and reasons for teacher powerlessness; however, contradictory literature does exist which positively associates power with teachers. Actually, although I have used the term teacher power rather casually in the discussion so far, this term appears to have been coined, or at least adopted by, a small body of literature mainly written in the 1960s and 1970s.

This literature defined teacher power as teachers' individual and collaborative power to make changes in their professional situations through methods such as collective bargaining (Donley, 1977; Flynn, 1974; Rotigel, 1972). This idea of teacher power surfaced during the time and as a direct result of the teacher unions reaching the height of their power and teachers utilizing collective bargaining and other actions, such as strikes, to advance their professional situations. However, even though literature concerned with teacher power does exist, its definitions and discussions lack dimension. This may be because although the idea of teacher power was proposed, it never fully came into existence throughout the United States. For example, while Flynn (1974) describes teachers as desiring power not only to advance their professional benefits, such as salary, but also "to affect educational change," his view of the reality of the situation of teachers is: "Teacher power, I wish we had it" (p. 734). Rotigel (1972) asserts that a major reason for teachers not coming into power "is the reluctance of teachers, as a group, to use their power collectively" (p. 76). The teachers in this study exhibited such reluctance, a topic explored in Chapter Four.

Because the concept of teacher power was short lived – it was dropped from the educational literature by 1980 – the term was never fully explored, developed, or contested. And, more importantly, there appear to be no stories or accounts from teachers concerning this idea of "teacher power." However, it is important, interesting, and almost incongruous to note that the definition of teacher power put forth in this literature correlates with the ideas the teachers in this study presented concerning teacher advocacy and the fact that they related teacher power to teacher advocacy. Why would

these teachers have similar definitions of teacher power as educational literature written more than twenty years before? Only one of the teachers from this study was teaching during this time and most of the teachers were not even attending teacher education programs during this time; in fact, some of the teachers were in elementary school themselves when the idea of "teacher power" dropped off the radar screen. The reasons for this are not apparent and, although I made the connection between this literature and the teachers' ideas, the teachers did not. Instead, the teachers tended to focus their conversations, and their efforts, on the areas of their job in which they did have power, mainly inside their classrooms. More recent literature that discusses teacher power focuses on such power inside the classroom.

For example, Couchenour and Dimino (1999) assert that "teachers wield a great deal of power in the lives of children" (p. 194). They discuss teacher power in relation to children and families and write that "teachers demonstrate power for children when they advocate for them by providing meaningful curriculum…and by forming partnerships with families and community agencies" (Couchenour & Dimino, 1999, p. 195). Certainly this definition relates to this study as it illustrates the general acceptance of the idea that teachers should and do advocate for children. Additional literature supports the idea that teachers utilize power to advocate for students.

Teachers as Advocates for Students

That teachers exercise power as advocates for students comes as little surprise to most, including teachers. Caring for, nurturing, and instructing a child for up to seven

hours a day, five days a week for approximately nine months, teachers are in a direct position to observe a child's learning, social, and emotional needs; note changes in a child's habits or actions; and respond to a child and the child's parents with communication, support, and information (Sammons & Lewis, 2000). In general, society, parents, administrators, and teachers, themselves, appear to hold a positive view of teachers who advocate for their students (Quatroche, et al., 2001; Schnaiberg, 2001; Walters, Micciulla, Parada, & Pellegrino, 1998). But it is just not really that simple. The reality is that teachers do choose to advocate for their students, but teachers choose and perform their actions carefully and within a small parameter, most often their own classrooms; this fact may be closely related to the isolation and individualism of teachers, as well as to the maternal role in which teachers often engage (Acker, 1995). The following examples show that teachers consistently choose to utilize power in order to address student needs – including academic, social/emotional, and physical – that the teachers observe in the classroom.

Student academic needs that teachers may choose to advocate for form a broad spectrum and may include issues such as adjusting instructional materials for special education students (Jewett et al., 1998) or integrating special topics into the curriculum (Elliot, 1991; Schnaiberg, 2001; Walters et al., 1998). Teachers utilize knowledge they have gained in the classroom about student instructional needs to advocate for students. For example, reading specialists attend to their students' instructional needs by assuming an "advocate role, that is, relaying important information to classroom teachers about their students" (Quatroche et al., 2001, p. 287). These teachers "provided insights into

the reasons individual students were experiencing difficulties" (Quatroche et al., 2001, p. 286) and were able to "enhance student self-esteem and motivate students to learn" (Quatroche et al., 2001, p. 288).

Teachers also gather and utilize information from outside of their classrooms in order to advocate for student academic needs. Jewett et al. (1998) report on early childhood teachers who exercised power for their special education students through actions such as "understanding and implementing the laws and regulations involved in transition of students in special education, learning about child and family needs, preparing students and families for smooth transitions, and collaborating with other professionals" (p. 329) in order to help the students make a smooth shift to Kindergarten. It appears that teachers have learned how to collect, analyze, and present data that is needed in order to advocate for the instructional success of their students; these skills may be a result of mandates and laws such as the 1997 IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act) which increases integration of special education students into regular education classrooms, thus requiring teachers to become more knowledgeable of both legal and instructional issues that directly relate to their students' success.

Teachers also utilize their knowledge of student needs to integrate special advocacy topics into the curriculum. Advocacy issues which teachers integrate into their curriculum may form around their student populations and often relate to power issues. For example, Schnaiberg (2001) wrote about teachers at the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center who advocated for students by integrating sensitive, but relevant social issues into their curriculum, such as race, discrimination, and freedom. Teachers may

also choose to integrate into their curriculum local community issues which affect their students. Describing a successful integration of applicable social action skills and environmental education into a science curriculum, Walters et al. (1998) report on a teacher and three high school students in New York City whose work led to the permanent closure of the world's largest garbage dump. The project developed the students' science skills, community connection, and political action; recognition from a local councilman's office legitimized the project. In such situations, teachers exercise their own power in an effort to increase their students' power by providing them with strategies for achieving social change (Elliot, 2001).

Teachers advocate for the social/emotional and physical needs, which sometimes overlap, of their students, as well. As a result of the 1974 Child Abuse Prevention Act, child care providers, including teachers, became more aware of their responsibility to the physical and emotional well-being of their students. By the end of that decade, approximately half of the teacher education programs were training teachers to recognize and report signs of child abuse (Zgliczynski & Rodolfa, 1980). However, teachers do not only advocate for children in such dire situations; teachers also proactively advocate for the social/emotional and physical needs of their students in a variety of ways. For example, Sammons and Lewis (2000) describe how teachers help children cope with the difficulties of parent divorce: "Although others may say the right words, a teacher is frequently the only adult willing to act as an advocate for the child" (p. 65). Teachers act as role models to "help parents understand how children's behavior and play give clues to the struggle within" (Sammons & Lewis, 2000, pp. 64-65) and support the child by

maintaining consistency at school, listening to the child's point of view, and keeping both parents involved in school work and activities. Many teachers take a proactive stance toward students' physical needs by teaching students how to advocate for their health and health education. Tappe and Galer-Unti (2001) call this "not only a requisite skill, but a responsibility of health educators" (p. 477). It is possible that teachers, and community members in general, accept this type of advocacy role for teachers because it aligns well with the nurturing role often associated with female teachers.

The literature suggests that most communities, administrators, students, and teachers themselves accept and appreciate teachers' use of power as advocates for their students. Still, the scope of advocacy activities remains narrow and often leaves teachers bewildered, such as teacher Jacqueline Hasson (1998) who wrote, "How far should I go in advocating for one of my first-graders?" (p. 57). Further, in some advocacy instances teachers may experience resistance from administrators, such as when teachers initiate changes in the curriculum that affects more than just their classrooms (Pace, 1992). This points to the powerlessness of teachers previously discussed. Yet, many administrators and teachers agree that teachers who advocate for students contribute to the success of those students (Quatroche et al., 2001).

Although much of this literature appears to celebrate teacher's use of power as advocates for students, it also seems to suggest that teacher power exists only because teachers work with children, a less powerful group. This is a common theme in the current literature. For example, Lightfoot (1983) describes one view of teachers "as all-powerful, central forces who determine the life chances of defenseless children" (p. 242).

Such a view minimizes the concept and reality of teacher power (and it should be noted that Lightfoot's writing goes on to demonstrate just this point). Although this current literature presents multiple ways in which teachers exercise power, the theme of teachers utilizing power on children or for children (Couchenour & Dimino, 1999) runs throughout. For example, while Thomas and Rinehart (1994) explore teacher power related to curriculum, the power they describe mainly affects or benefits children. The literature discussed here also has gaps; it does not, for example, explain how teachers learn the advocacy skills they utilize for children and teach to children. Nor does the literature explore, reinforce, or share teachers' stories and perspectives about teacher power for themselves and other teachers.

Further, some of the literature implies a division between student welfare and teacher welfare. Although, leaders such as Margaret Haley (1904) have remarked,

> There is no possible conflict between the interest of the child and the interest of the teacher…For both the child and the teacher, freedom is the condition of development. The atmosphere in which it is easiest to teach is the atmosphere in which it is easiest to learn. The same things that are a burden to the teacher are a burden also to the child. The same things which restrict her powers restrict his powers also (in Donley, 1976, p. 20),

such sentiments appear to be in the minority. In reality, most teachers feel "torn between their desire to promote and improve public education and their determination to better their own conditions" (Donley, 1976, p. 8). It may be for these reasons that teachers have historically relied on teacher unions to promote teacher welfare issues. Teachers join

unions to form a collective force and to have representatives that can actively advocate for them while they teach in their classrooms. Not surprisingly, a majority of the literature I found concerning advocacy for teachers focused on teacher unions.

Teacher Unions

Teachers have primarily relied on collective organizations since the mid-1800s to advance their common needs and desires. Although the first local teachers' association – the Society of Associated Teachers of New York City – was established in 1794, it was not until 1857 that a national teachers' association was formed (Donley, 1977). Even after the national association was organized, membership remained small, around 300, until the late 1800s (Donley, 1977). Little documentation exists about the goals or successes of these early organizations. What is known is that until the early 1900s, few teachers joined these associations (Lieberman, 2000).

In the early 1900s, new teacher organizations, such as the Chicago Federation of Teachers, formed "whose goal was to represent teachers' interests" in the professional setting (Urban, 1982, p. 9). Teachers who joined these unions had "the usual worker goals – higher wages, better benefits, and improved working conditions" (Selden, 1985, p. 109). Although the NEA (National Education Association) and the AFT (American Federation of Teachers) also formed during this time, teachers garnered little power from them and instead depended on their local unions for teacher advocacy; neither national organization could focus chiefly on the needs of teachers as the NEA continued to be "controlled by school administrators, superintendents, and some college professors"

(Cheng, 1981, p. 10) and the AFT was struggling with its alignment with the AFL (American Federation of Labor) and the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) (Cheng). Local affiliates, however, pursued professional improvement for their members, including salary scales, pensions, tenure, and seniority and "helped raise teaching in the cities to the status of a career for the women who practiced it" (Urban, 1982, p. 22).

During the 1960s and 1970s, both national and local unions actively exerted power for teacher professional welfare. During this time the unions chose to utilize somewhat militant and rebellious tactics which accomplished immediate gains for teachers, but which also caused discord within and outside the unions for teachers. Examples of these tactics include the 631 teacher strikes, work stoppages, or interruptions of service in the United States from 1960 to 1971 (Myers, 1973). Although many teachers joined in these tactics, others did not, and even those who did often felt a conflict of interest. Donley (1976) notes, "Teachers groups have been strained and occasionally torn apart by conflicting needs to serve society and to serve self" (p. 8).

Regardless of the controversy that arose from union tactics, the reality is that remarkable gains were made for both teachers and education in general during this time, including equal salary schedules for men and women, collective bargaining rights in almost every state, higher pay, smaller class sizes, more teacher input and decision making in curriculum planning, and better overall school conditions (Donley, 1976). In the early 1980s teachers and their unions almost completely abandoned the advocacy tactics that had earned them such gains. The literature posits several possibilities of why

teachers abandoned these tactics.

First, the short stint of militant tactics produced and promoted by teacher unions created backlash against teachers. Though Americans value public education, their regard of teachers appears to have changed little in the past century. Viewed as public servants, not professionals, teachers have often been warned "that they should not pursue self-interest in any case" (Donley, 1976, pp. 17-18). Public opinion during the union militancy period of the 1960s and 1970s generally reflected this same sentiment. For example, a

> newspaper editorial opinion about the New York City 1962 strike was highly critical. The strike was labeled 'not in the public interest,' 'irresponsible,' 'shocking,' 'a bitter blow against the city's million schoolchildren,' and 'a disgrace.' Typical was this comment by the *Washington Post*: 'The teachers' strike which began in New York yesterday is a tragedy for the whole city – for its citizens whose irresponsible lethargy is one of the causes of the strike, for the teacher themselves whose action, born of desperation, mars the high pretensions of their calling, and for the children, of course, who are the helpless victims of this undisciplined adult strike' (Donley, 1976, p. 51).

Beyond public disapproval, teachers were also disillusioned by such tactics.

Second, the inability of the AFT and the NEA to merge also seriously inhibited the unions' ability to facilitate comprehensive professional gains for teachers which may have been accomplished by a unified organization. This effectively divided teachers into two camps. Although as early as 1968, discussions of a merger between the NEA and

AFT were attempted, today only local organizations have succeeded in merging (NEA, 2000).

Third, economic and political changes also affected union action on behalf of teacher advocacy.

> By the mid-seventies, the big cities, power centers of the teacher rebellion, were beset by rising unemployment, mounting inflation, near-epidemic crime, growing racial hostility, and political reaction. The schools, repositories of hope, came under increasingly heavy attack from the right and the left (Selden, 1985, p. 229).

In 1982, the National Commission of Excellence in Education released the infamous *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform.* Among its findings, the Committee "charged that the [school] curriculum had been gutted, student discipline had been destroyed, teachers were lacking in intellectual quality and that teacher initiative had been sapped by collective bargaining" (Selden, 1985, p. 241). Union and teacher response to the report was divisive and disorganized, further advancing public distrust of teachers and their organizations.

Currently, both national unions and local affiliates continue to operate; however, their focus has broadened quite a bit and their success in making substantial professional gains for teachers is ambiguous. Unions appear to have become multifaceted benefit hawkers who tout member perks, from credit cards to low rate car insurance, more vociferously than legislative actions or gains. Is this because teachers' professional needs have changed, because "a new generation of teachers who are less interested in

'worker rights' and collective action" (Cooper & Liotta, 2001, p. 102) have entered our schools, or because teachers fear a recurrence of the backlash they encountered in the 1960s and 1970s after the unions' militant tactics? The answer is unclear.

What is clear from all of the literature reviewed here is that teachers receive conflicting messages about their power and have contradictory experiences with power. For the teachers in this study, these conflicting messages and experiences led to ambivalence toward power.

Significance of the Literature to this Study

The literature reviewed in this chapter is important to this study because it provides a situational context for teachers, presents contradictory views of teachers as powerless and powerful, demonstrates that teachers do have power and advocate for others, and gives some background on the most widely perceived outlet for teacher advocacy, teacher unions. Taken together this literature illustrates the contradictory images and information that teachers often receive about their power. Apparent in this literature review are the missing voices, stories, and experiences of teachers, teachers who exercise, negotiate, and even resist power.

Following, Chapter Three describes the methodology of this study, which utilized two focus groups of elementary teachers over a period of two years. The chapter details the research design, data collection techniques, participants, data analysis and interpretation methods, and methodological limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The stories and experiences of teachers, and the meanings that teachers attach to such stories and experiences, are all too absent from educational research. Nias (1989) writes,

> Surprisingly, an occupation which has for nearly 200 years attached great importance to the idea of knowing and catering for the individual child has paid little formal attention to the concept of the individual teacher. Particularly primary teachers have attracted some largely unflattering attention from fiction writers, but very little from academics or from teachers themselves (pp. 18-19).

This study sought to focus on the perspectives and experiences of elementary teachers concerning teacher advocacy. The study utilized focus groups as a medium for two small groups of elementary teachers to share their stories as individuals and groups. Researchers such as Nias (1996) and Noddings (1996) argue for including teacher stories in educational research in general and in teacher education literature specifically.

This chapter describes the research design of this study, data collection techniques, participants, and data analysis and interpretation methods. In addition, limitations of the methodology are also explored.

Research Design

The major question driving this study is: How do elementary classroom teachers perceive their ability to act as advocates to change their professional situations? Sub-questions of this study include: How do teachers perceive union membership as an advocate outlet? To whom do teachers turn for support when they engage in advocate activities? What forces inhibit/encourage teachers to become advocates? Where do teachers learn to become advocates?

This study utilized data from the previously mentioned Phase I and Phase II focus groups. Phase I was conducted in the spring of 2003 at an elementary school located in Austin, Texas. Five elementary teachers, including me, were involved in this focus group. The school was part of a small independent school district composed of six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The elementary school itself had approximately 600 students, 60 teachers and staff, a full-time principal and a part-time assistant principal. Both the school and district were in a high socio-economic status area and the ethnic breakdown of the district was approximately 97% white and 3% other, including Hispanic, African American, and Asian American.

Phase II was conducted in the spring of 2004 with three elementary teachers, and me, in Shreveport, Louisiana. The teachers taught at different elementary schools, but all taught in the same school district and all attended an elementary education alternative certification program at the small liberal arts college at which I work. The school district in which these teachers worked was composed of 48 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, and 14 high schools. The district encompassed areas of low to high socio-

economic status with an ethnic breakdown of 62.5% African American, 36.1% white, and 1.4% other students. The college which these teachers attended had approximately 100 faculty and enrolled approximately 1000 students, the ethnic breakdown of which was 83% white, 7% African American, 2% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 1% Indian, 4% International, and 1% other. These teachers were not enrolled in my classes, nor did I supervise them for the duration of the study.

For this dissertation, data from Phase I and II was first analyzed independently for insights into the views of each group of participants; then, cross-case analysis was conducted to explore the similarities and differences in the participants' stories and to compare these to relevant literature. Finally, these data were used as a site for theory generation about the topic of teacher advocacy. It is important to note that data will be presented in context and findings will not be generalized beyond the participant groups (Flores & Alonso, 1995).

Critical Feminist Perspective

Throughout this study, I utilized a critical feminist perspective and methodology consistent with this perspective. "A critical feminist perspective is proposed as a view that encompasses a focus on gender as well as other sources of social and cultural inequity and an emphasis on transformative potential" (Kushner & Morrow, 2003, p. 31). Studying a field – elementary education – composed primarily of women and working with exclusively women participants, a feminist perspective helped me "focus on women's experiences in everyday life as it is familiar to them" (Madriz, 2000, p. 838).

Advancing the feminist idea of the personal as political, I collaborated with the participants in a process that valued women's ways of knowing (see Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) to explore experiences and build stories. Goldstein (1997) states, "In feminist research collaboration the expectation is that both the researcher and the participants learn as a result of engaging in the research process: feminist research is a form of consciousness-raising" (p. 131). The fact that I sought to understand the perceptions of teachers concerning their "power relations…within particular sociocultural and historical contexts" (Qin, 2004, p. 306) brought me to a *critical* feminist perspective.

Because I did not enter this study believing that teachers were powerless, I reject the idea of emancipation so often associated with a critical perspective. I also agree with Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) who cite specific problems associated with the idea of emancipation such as "no one is ever completely emancipated from the sociopolitical context" and "the arrogance that may accompany efforts to emancipate 'others'" (p. 282). In fact, I sought "an understanding of the hidden, subversive ways in which they [women] exercise their agency even when part of a repressive normative order" (Stacki & Monkman, 2003, p. 174). Stacki and Monkman (2003) believe that such "evasive tactics, private writings, and personal networking of the respondents brings comprehensiveness to feminist case studies" (p. 174). However, even though I reject the idea of emancipation, I embrace the idea of empowerment, a term often related to feminist research.

In this study, my ideas about empowerment relate to Stacki and Monkman's (2003) "notions of empowerment of women…as 'power to' and not 'power over'"

(p.181). Specifically, this study sought to explore psychological empowerment which enables "women to recognize their own power" (Stacki & Monkman, 2003, p. 181) and political empowerment which "involves the ability to analyze one's world and to organise and mobilise for social change" (Stacki & Monkman, 2003, p. 181).

> I believe that this study answers Qin's (2004) call for the
>
> need to produce a small-scale situation partial-theory based on diverse groups of women's self-understandings and the meanings they make out of their unique and different lived experiences…No single feminist self-theory can possibly capture the 'truth' about all women, as every truth is incomplete, partial, and culture bound. In place of these grand theories, critical feminist theorists suggest looking for multiplicities, or micro-theories. Feminist researchers need to focus on developing specific and local knowledge that informs and leads to understanding women's different senses of self across diverse sociocultural contexts (p. 307).

The following section details the data collection methods that I utilized to create such a study guided by critical feminist methods such as "generated knowledge, engagement in nonoppressive research methods, and reflexivity" (Kushner & Morrow, 2003, p. 38).

Data Collection

Data collection began in the winter of 2003 when five elementary teachers, including me, agreed to meet before the school day for six sessions spread over several months. Although the meetings concluded by May of 2003, participants have continued to maintain contact. Data collection also took place in the spring of 2004 when another

group of three elementary teachers, plus me, met for six sessions also spread out over several months. Descriptions of each teacher, including teaching experience and relationships to each other, are included in this chapter. The meetings that occurred with each group were conducted as focus groups, the predominant method for data collection in this research study.

Focus Groups

Developed in the 1920's, focus groups, also referred to as group interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Panyan, Hillman, & Liggett, 1997), are recognized as a useful research technique and utilized for various research purposes – by market researchers to discover consumer desires, by social scientists to develop questionnaires, and even by politicians to ascertain constituent perspectives (Madriz, 2000). Focus groups in educational research are a more recent occurrence; they have been used to gather course evaluation information from students (Christopher, 2000), "as a tool for evaluating and revising teacher education programs" (Panyan, et. al., 1997, p. 37), and to explore teachers' perspectives on education reform (Flores & Alonso, 1995).

Focus groups were chosen as the primary data collection method for this study because the purpose of the study was not only to investigate how participants felt about teacher advocacy, but also why they felt as they did. Supporting this idea, Flores and Alonso (1995) note that, "This technique [focus groups] seems to adapt itself to situations in which researchers are interested in knowing people's perspectives toward a theme or educational reality and in understanding the reasons for these perspectives" (p. 99).

Advantages of focus groups include the group interaction which allows participants "to generate ideas and insights that would not be generated otherwise" (Panyan et al., 1997, pp. 42-43); the multiple opportunities participants have to reflect upon and respond to questions (Panyan et al., 1997); and the ability of the researcher to gather several participants' responses efficiently and inexpensively (Christopher, 2000).

Focus groups were also chosen for this study because the participants and the researcher are women; focus groups have been advanced as an important research tool when working with women because they can support "the communal and collectivist nature of women's lives" and "unveil specific and little-researched aspects of women's daily existences, their feelings, attitudes, hopes, and dreams" (Madriz, 2000, p. 836). Feminist researchers support such nontraditional interview techniques because they allow for greater reciprocity between the researcher and the participants, for example when the researcher answers questions and shares feelings, and blur the traditional interviewing hierarchy (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Although the process of focus groups creates rich data, a clear disadvantage of focus groups is that the themes and information extracted from such data cannot be generalized outside the participant population (Flores & Alonso, 1995; Fontana & Frey, 2000). Other limitations include participants' conformity, "similar to groupthink" (Panyan et al., 1997, p. 43), and participants being hesitant to express divergent or unpopular views (Christopher, 2000). However, in this study, the advantages of focus groups far outweigh the disadvantages:

> The relaxed atmosphere created, the confidence of people who are among others with the same characteristics, and the mutual reinforcement that provides evidence that others have similar opinions about the same theme allow this technique to create a greater wealth of data than other classic procedures relative to feelings, attitudes, desire, and opinions. The dialogue activates participants' memories and experiences, confronts points of view, allows participants to be conscious of latent opinions, obliges them to question themes ignored until that moment, and involves looking for arguments to support an unreasoned perception or feeling. The produced data are real because the participants reciprocally influence one another in the same way as it happens in real life (Flores & Alonso, 1995, p. 99).

Focus groups were used to gather data for both Phase I and II of this study. Detailed information about development of the focus groups and group participants follows.

Phase I: Methods

For Phase I, a focus group of five elementary teachers was formed who met for six interview sessions over a period of nine weeks. The teachers voluntarily participated in the focus group, which consisted of the same five teachers for each of the six interviews. Such a group size can produce valuable information (Christopher, 2000) as it allows for "more active and in-depth participation by all group members" (Panyan et al., 1997, p. 44).

Teachers were purposefully chosen for the group based on previously identified characteristics that would facilitate optimum group interaction. Characteristics that the teachers had in common were their race, gender, socioeconomic status, and current teaching location: they were white, middle class women who had taught at the same elementary school for at least four years. The participants shared good working and social relationships; some, but not all of them, met outside of school for social functions. This type of group homogeneity establishes "a safe environment" (Madriz, 2000, p. 835) for participants and "creates a context in which freedom is given to discuss the theme openly and to express socially unpopular or provoking ideas that would not be expressed to other types of people" (Flores & Alonso, 1995, p. 89).

However, without some heterogeneity among participants, discussion would stagnate quite quickly (Flores & Alonso, 1995); therefore, differences among the teachers were also identified before invitation to participate in the study was extended. The participants varied in age from 28 to 53, in the number of years teaching from 6 to 23, and in teaching experiences outside of this elementary school. All participants attended different colleges and teacher education programs; one participant graduated with a non-education degree and worked in a field outside of education for two years before becoming a teacher. Participants also varied in their affiliation or activity with advocacy issues or groups. As moderator and participant, I shared these similarities and differences with the teacher participants; Panyan, Hillman, and Liggett (1997) found that the moderators with similar group characteristics "helped advance interaction and open communication throughout the group sessions" (p. 44).

Once possible group members were identified, I personally met with each teacher to invite her to participate and to discuss the study and study procedures. Each invited teacher agreed to participate and to receive emails concerning study particulars, such as meeting times. Participants were then contacted through email and asked for day and time preferences; all participants requested to meet before school began during the week at 7:30 am. The advantage of meeting at this time was that there would be little to no interruptions, such as parent or committee meetings; the disadvantage of this time was that we only had thirty minutes to meet before the school day began. To facilitate the teachers arriving at this time, I provided breakfast and coffee for each interview session. Interviews took place in my classroom at the elementary school, a location familiar, comfortable, and accessible to each teacher (Christopher, 2000; Madriz, 2000).

To begin each interview, I provided broad open-ended questions to stimulate conversation among participants concerning teacher advocacy. As Smulyan (2004), "While I had a list of questions I wanted to be sure to cover, I also followed the issues and concerns raised by the participants in the study" (p. 519). I formulated the questions for the first interview based on the previously discussed literature review; questions for each additional interview were created and based on issues or ideas discussed at the previous interview (Panyan et al., 1997). Participants were encouraged to also ask questions; "by asking questions, participants contribute to challenge each other's contradictions and responses" (Madriz, 2000, p. 841). At these times, "the moderator does not intervene" for her job is "simply exposing the theme, provoking an atmosphere of discussion, and catalyzing the production of the discourse, relieving silences and

controlling the development of the discussion to keep within the theme" (Flores & Alonso, 1995, p. 94). Through this questioning and response, the participants and I were able to "engage in dialogue, sharing ideas, opinions, and experiences, and even debate" (Madriz, 2000, p. 841); the process served as validation for some group members of their feelings and actions, consciousness-raising for other group members as to what new actions they would like to take. Moreover, the group appeared to begin to create a shared knowledge about teacher advocacy. Once completed, the focus group interviews were transcribed from audio tapes recorded during each interview. In all transcriptions, notes, or study materials of any kind, I used pseudonyms and did not identify participants by personal or professional information in order to maintain confidentiality. Descriptions of individual participants from Phase I follow.

Phase I: Participants

Bev. Bev had been teaching for eight years and was 30 years old when this study began. Bev had known since high school that she wanted to be a teacher; to her dismay, when she confided this fact in two of her high school teachers, she received much discouragement. Bev stated that her high school Spanish teacher felt she was too talented to pursue education and questioned her decision, while another high school teacher, who she "respected very highly," told her "flat out, 'Bev, you are too smart to be a teacher'" (2003, Int. 2, 48-49). Although she said she was "crushed" (2003, Int. 2, 49) by these incidents, Bev still chose to major in elementary education in college and in 1995 received a bachelor's degree in elementary education with bilingual certification. After

graduation, Bev taught in several bilingual elementary classrooms before accepting a position as a third grade teacher, her position during this study, which she regarded as a considerable transition from working with low socio economic, marginalized bilingual students to affluent, mainstream students. At the time of our focus group meetings, Bev had chosen to continue her own education and was pursuing a master's degree in educational administration.

It was her experiences as an elementary bilingual teacher that first compelled Bev to explore advocacy issues; she stated, "I constantly acted as an advocate for my students because they were such a small percentage of the campus population and were forgotten/excluded from many routine items due to the language differences" (personal communication, June 23, 2003). Bev's actions attended to a variety of her students' personal and academic needs: she described making sure all school communication was translated into Spanish before going home; rewriting curriculum "so that our [bilingual] students' skills matched that of their English counterparts" on the benchmark tests; reviewing the Spanish components of new materials, such as textbooks, for "validity"; and making sure the students in the bilingual program "got their fair share of appropriate supplies" (personal communication, June 23, 2003).

In her position as a third grade teacher, she was also the team leader for the third grade teachers, which Bev felt allowed her to "act as an advocate for my instructional colleagues" (personal communication, June 23, 2003). Illustrating how she advocated for the teachers on her team, Bev stated, "I support their ideas and methods; I advise them when necessary. I act as a liason between our team and our administration. When

approached by parents regarding our teachers and their policies, I support my teachers and our policies" (personal communication, June 23, 2003). It is easy to see in these statements the future assistant principal that Bev has now become.

Jill. Jill was 28 years old and a Kindergarten teacher with six years of teaching experience at the onset of this study. Jill attended a large Texas university where she graduated with a degree in early childhood education. Like Bev, Jill received discouragement about her decision to study education in the form of "a lot of criticism from friends"; for example, when Jill took an early childhood art class, her friends "would joke how [Jill] was off to her 8:00 playgroup" (personal communication, June 23, 2004). Jill persevered because, like other teachers, she believed that what she "wanted to do was a valuable job and service" (Coeyman, 1998; Marchant, 2000; Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003; Schultz et al., 2001). After graduation, Jill taught Kindergarten for two years in a small, southeastern Texas town before accepting the Kindergarten position she occupied during this study.

Jill felt that part of her job was to act as a student advocate, even if that sometimes placed her in an awkward professional situation. Jill described a time when she believed one of her Kindergarten students needed special education services. After some observation and testing, the special education diagnostician concluded that the student had no significant impairments. Although Jill's principal initially concurred with Jill, he did not support Jill in the ARD [Admission, Review, and Dismissal committee] meeting with the child's parents and other school officials. Jill stood by her opinion and wrote a statement that she "officially disagreed" (personal communication, June 23, 2004) with

the committee's decision. Jill described the events that ensued, "After the ARD, I was called into the principal's office and told how important" it was to show a "united front to the family" (personal communication, June 23, 2004) of the student. About the situation, Jill stated, "I just felt that sometime in the future, someone else is going to feel the same way I did [about the student], and they needed to know they weren't alone. I don't know how that student is doing today, but I do feel like a made a small difference in her life" (personal communication, June 23, 2004).

Maureen. Maureen began her career as an accountant after receiving a bachelor of arts in psychology in 1980 and a bachelor of business administration in accounting in 1982. After two years as an accountant, Maureen returned to college to acquire her teaching certification for elementary education. About this decision, Maureen stated, "I didn't consider going into teaching when I was in college because I thought I was smarter than that" (2003, Int. 1, 81-82). After Maureen dealt with her own feelings about becoming a teacher, she had to deal with reactions from her peers; she described, "Everybody felt so sorry for me. All my coworkers at the bank said, 'Oh, that [teaching] will be good while your kids are little.' Like it wasn't a *real* job" (2003, Int. 1, 85-86).

Upon completion of certification, Maureen taught third grade in a low socio economic elementary school in large urban area of Texas. After that, she taught preschool in a private school for three years before returning to public education at the school in which she worked during the study. At this elementary school, she had taught Kindergarten, K/1 multiage, first grade, and second grade. Maureen had taught for ten years and was teaching second grade when the study began.

Maureen approached her job a little differently than the other teachers in the focus group due to her career experience outside of education. She referred to herself as a "professional educator" (personal communication, June 28, 2004) and often compared and contrasted her past work situation as an accountant with her current job as a teacher.

Maureen stated that "an important part of my job…is to act as an advocate for my students…I think I'm doing that job everyday" (personal communication, June 28, 2004). She described situations in which she advocated for students whose health or learning disabilities affected their educational performance. In one situation, she worked for two years communicating with parents and school professionals so that "the child was able to get the assistance he needed to succeed in school" (personal communication, June 28, 2004).

Carol. Carol was a Kindergarten teacher with 23 years of experience as we began our focus group. She received her bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1972 in Illinois and her master's degree in education in 1988 in Texas. Carol had classroom teaching experience as a multi-age second/third grade teacher and as a Kindergarten teacher. For Carol, teaching was "a passion" (2003, Int. 2, 160); it was her way "to make the world a better place" (2003, Int. 2, 158).

Carol was the most active and outspoken teacher of the group concerning advocacy issues, a reflection of her belief "that an educator is an advocate for students, parents and public education" (personal communication, January 4, 2005). Although Carol was "very comfortable in the advocacy role" (2003, Int. 1, 181) for students and could describe efforts on behalf of students, she was "less comfortable in being an

activist" (2003, Int. 1, 187). However, she had begun to involve herself in activist issues; about this, she stated, "I'm out of my comfort zone a little bit with the activism, but I'm starting small things because I'm so egocentric that I can see how quickly this issue will affect me" (2003, Int. 1, 205-207).

Carol was also an active member of a teacher's union. She believed that unions were an "empowering tool," that they gave teachers "ways to make ourselves heard," and provided "a lot of people behind us in the profession that are fighting to make the profession better" (2003, Int. 2, 108-111). Carol viewed herself as "an important member of my union" and stated, "I pay my dues, I read the newsletter, I email, I know what's going on, and I see all the advances that we've made" (2003, Int. 1, 125-127). Carol was the only member of her focus group who held such views.

Phase II: Methods

For Phase II of the study, I formed a similar focus group size of four practicing teachers, three elementary teachers plus me, who also met for six interview sessions – one individual interview and five group interviews – over a period of eleven weeks. These teachers also voluntarily participated in the study and the focus group consisted of the same participants for each of the five group interviews. The elementary teachers were white, middle class women attending the same alternative teaching certificate program at the small liberal arts college at which I work. They all taught elementary school in the same parish, but at different schools. The participants varied in age from 29 to 43 and in their affiliation or activity with advocacy issues or groups. As moderator

and participant, I shared some similarities with the other participants, such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and past teaching experiences.

The elementary teachers for Phase II were a purposeful sample that stemmed from both the characteristics and findings from the Phase I focus group. For example, because the participants in Phase I discussed their teacher education programs and the lack of information about advocacy issues they felt they received, participants for Phase II were recruited from students currently enrolled in the same teacher education program to have both an up to date recollection of classes and topics discussed and multiple perceptions of the program to compare and contrast. However, utilizing teachers in the field was important for continuity in focus group composition, so all participants in Phase II were practicing elementary teachers who were attending their alternative certification program in the evenings and summer. To further explore unions as an advocacy outlet and influence, participants were chosen from a state, Louisiana, which allows collective bargaining by teacher unions and from a school district in which three teacher unions are active. As well, participants were chosen based on their previous work outside of education to investigate if, like Maureen from Phase I, teachers with previous work experience outside of education would carry different perspectives on the culture of teaching and the current situation of teachers than individuals who have only been professional teachers.

Group members for Phase II were recruited through email invitations sent to every elementary education major at the college, announcements made in each elementary education class, and phone calls. Each volunteer teacher agreed to receive

emails concerning study particulars; through email, participants chose to meet Thursdays at 3:30 after the school day. Because the teachers worked at different elementary schools, interviews took place at a familiar, comfortable, and accessible location (Christopher, 2000; Madriz, 2000), the student lounge in the Education Department. I provided a snack and beverages for each session, as the teachers came to our interviews directly from work.

The interview process for Phase II was very similar to the process of Phase I; however, Phase II began with an individual interview with each participant. I choose to begin Phase II with individual interviews for the participants and me to gain familiarity with each other and to gather more detailed background information about each teacher. This was necessary because I was working with participants with whom I had no prior relationship; initial interviews were not necessary when working with colleagues from Phase I. Five subsequent group interviews followed the individual interviews. For the group interviews, I utilized broad open-ended questions to stimulate conversation among participants concerning teacher advocacy. Questions for each interview were formulated based on the previously discussed literature review, the six interviews from Phase I, the individual interviews from Phase II, and issues or ideas discussed at the preceding interview (Panyan et al., 1997). As in Phase I, each interview was transcribed from audio tapes recorded during the interview; pseudonyms were used on all study documents and no personal or professional information, such as the participant's teaching location, was identified in order to maintain confidentiality. Descriptions of individual participants follow.

Phase II: Participants

Sara. Sara was 29 and in her first year teaching sixth grade when Phase II began. Although she "went to college for acting" (2004, Int. 1), Sara received her bachelor's degree in communication disorders. After graduation, she held a multitude of jobs, mainly in dance and theater work. First, she worked at Disney World and Universal Studios where she found she "liked working with kids" (2004, Int.1). From there she toured the United States and performed classical literature plays for elementary schools. After that she taught preschool dance and theater. In order to facilitate a move to her fiancé's city, she worked in a casino to "be a part of the entertainment industry," but found that "adults are a lot more demanding than children" (2004, Int.1). After working for two years as a receptionist, she remembered that she "liked teaching the little kids" (2004, Int.1) the best and decided to return to college to obtain her teaching certificate. While attending education classes, she was hired to teach sixth grade about which she stated, "I love being back in school" (2004, Int.1).

Although Sara had experience with actors' unions, she did not belong to and was not informed about teachers' unions. Advocacy in schools was a new idea for her and she felt that if advocacy was happening in her school, "it's probably mostly for students" (2004, Int. 4, 334-335) although she added, "There is still a limit in helping a child" (2004, Int. 4, 336).

Diane. Diane was 43 and teaching Kindergarten during the study. Diane originally graduate with a bachelor's degree in business administration and worked in banking for ten years before quitting to be a full-time mother. She was introduced to the

idea of becoming a teacher through her volunteer work at her children's private school, where she eventually took a job as a teacher aide. With encouragement from the school staff and because she "truly loved it [teaching]" (2004, Int. 2, 61), Diane decided to return to college to obtain her teacher certification.

In our initial interview, Diane stated that although she was "very passionate about my beliefs," she had never been involved in advocacy actions "because that is really not my personality" (2004, Int. 2, 185-186). However, she stated that as teachers "we are constantly" (2004, Int. 4, 252) advocating for students. In her own class, she described how she advocated for students by trying to get more special services, such as gifted programs, for her students; when students did not qualify for the gifted program, she herself integrated higher level activities in her classroom to meet the students' needs. She stated, "I do everything I can that is possible for me to do to make sure that if there are certain services that some of my children" (2004, Int. 4, 265) might need, they get it. "You *have* to be an advocate for your kids" (Diane, 2004, Int. 4, 268-269).

Leslie. Leslie was 26 years old and in her third year of teaching during our interviews. Although Leslie wanted to study elementary education in college, her aunt, who was a teacher, discouraged her by saying "it was the worst profession to be in" (2004, Int. 3, 22). So, Leslie graduated from college with a bachelor's degree in communication and public relations. Her first job was as a restaurant manager, but working 60 hours a week took its toll on her and Leslie then took a job as a retail store manager where she only worked 45-50 hours a week. However, she still longed to be a teacher and so, after five years, she returned to college for her teaching certification.

While attending classes, she secured a job as an Early Childhood Education teacher. Even though she enjoyed that position, she was released after one year because she was uncertified. Her second teaching position was as a Kindergarten teacher; however, she was forced to leave this position because her alternative certification program did not include Kindergarten certification. When we began our focus group, Leslie was teaching first grade, a position she planned to keep as long as possible.

Leslie believed that she was an advocate for her students. In our initial interview, she was able to describe two situations in which she advocated as a teacher. The first situation involved obtaining special education services for needy students; in the second situation, Leslie approached her curriculum coordinator about changing the outdated math and phonics program currently being used in her school. To her delight, the curriculum coordinator took Leslie's suggestions and the first grade team gained new materials for the upcoming school year.

Leslie joined the teachers' union after her first year teaching because she had seen the union advocate for another teacher. When Leslie lost her job as an ECE teacher, the union president contacted school administrators and acted as an advocate for Leslie. Although Leslie did not get to keep her ECE position, she said of the union, "I saw that it worked" (2004, Int. 3, 196).

Electronic and Other Communication

In addition to the group interviews, participants in both Phase I and II were presented with the option to email me concerning thoughts and feelings they had during

or after the interview. These emails were accepted at any time during or after the interview process and were considered data. Three of the participants from Phase I sent one or more emails concerning thoughts about an interview, actions they took after an interview, or information regarding an issue that was raised during an interview. No participants from Phase II sent emails; however, two of the participants brought literature to a focus group meeting or left literature on my office door concerning information about an issue raised during a session. Through this optional activity, participants were empowered to extend their contribution to the study beyond the six interviews. These communications also served as a form of member checking (Janesick, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

As researcher, moderator, and participant, I was the primary data analyst in this study. Flores and Alonso (1995) suggest combining moderating and analysis when working with focus groups because the moderator has "the best information about facial expressions, the tone used, the atmosphere, and the contextualization of meaningful elements that could be distinguished in the discourse" (p. 96). Although I was the primary data analyst, a second reader, in the form of a peer debriefer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), was enlisted to examine all findings, but particularly the data and findings from Phase I. Because of my close connection to the participants, this second reader was used to ensure the reliability of the data and themes extracted therein. Further information on the peer debriefer is provided in the trustworthiness section later in this chapter.

Early data analysis was facilitated through the use of analytic files (Glesne, 1999; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Glesne (1999) writes that

> analytic files build as you collect data…These files provide a way to keep track of useful information and thoughts. As your data and experience grow, you will create relevant specific files on the social processes under investigation…Ideally, the existence of these files alerts you to what you might otherwise miss in the course of study…Data analysis is the process of organizing and storing data in light of your increasingly sophisticated judgments (pp. 131-132).

As described by Glesne (1999), my initial analytic files were few in number and generically organized, including pilot study proposals, interview questions, and relevant literature. As the study progressed, my analytic files became more complex encompassing literature filed by theme, transcripts by consecutive dates, communication with my dissertation chair and peer debriefer, and researcher notes. These analytic files were significant in developing interview questions, the composition of the focus groups, and final themes.

Once both focus groups were completed, data analysis was facilitated through repeated line by line reading of the transcripts, communications, and researcher notes; the process of constant comparison revealed recurring issues and themes (Flores & Alonso, 1995; Panyan et al., 1997). Ryan and Bernard (2000) note that "themes are abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that investigators identify before, during, and after data collection" (p. 780). For this study, initial themes were pulled from the literature review and from repeated or common language utilized by the participants from Phase I to

describe their perceptions of teacher advocacy. Initial themes included: the difference in the teachers' perceptions concerning the idea of teacher advocacy versus or in parallel with teacher activism, teacher unions, isolation and communication, generational changes, status, powerlessness, and rule breakers/rule followers.

At the completion of Phase II, the transcripts for this phase were analyzed. Themes pulled from repeated or common language found in these transcripts and from additional literature included: power in the job, power in unions, power in the decision to become a teacher, race, and isolation/communication.

Finally, transcripts from both phases were analyzed for common themes. The final themes are, of course, presented in this dissertation and include the overarching and major theme of "Ambivalence toward Power" and the supporting sub-themes of "Power and Resistance," "Negotiating Power," and "Reluctance to Access Power." Categories of supporting data within sub-themes were identified. Within "Power and Resistance," categories include "Becoming Teachers" and "Covert Power." Within "Negotiating Power," a sole category is presented: "Power and Principals." And within "Reluctance to Access Power," categories include "Unions" and "Personal Benefit." Each sub-theme is presented with supporting data from the study in the form of direct quotes and is also accompanied by relevant literature.

I have taken great care to present the findings appropriately and accurately to maintain the integrity of participants' sharing and experiences, while also vividly portraying their significance to the reader.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was addressed in this study in several ways. First, a "three-fold process of reflexivity" (Gannerud, 2001, p. 58) was utilized during the research process: (1) "intra-individual reflection," (2) "inter-individual reflection," and (3) "self-reflection" (Gannerud, 2001, p. 58) by the researcher. Intra-individual reflection was accomplished by providing each participant with transcripts of each focus group meeting prior to the next meeting. This allowed for group members to email me concerning any corrections in the transcripts and also to discuss topics further in subsequent interviews. Corrections were necessary one time and I communicated such corrections to all group members prior to our next session. Inter-individual reflection involved either other participants or me broaching topics presented in previous sessions for all participants to discuss and reflect upon; such inter-individual reflection facilitated a form of "co-analysis" (Gannerud, 2001, p. 58). Both the intra-individual reflection and the inter-individual reflection also served as forms of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, self-reflection played a large role in trustworthiness. Guided by Gannerud's (2001) methods, I examined "my own background, my role as researcher and how these factors influenced the research process" (p. 58). In doing so, I realized that special attention would need to be paid to the relationship between the participants from Phase I and me and the power differentials that existed between the participants from Phase II and me.

To aid me in this endeavor, I enlisted the help of a peer debriefer during data analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1985) write that "the task of the debriefer is to be sure that the investigator is as fully aware of his or her posture and process as possible" (p. 308).

This debriefer specifically helped me attend to possible researcher bias due to my prior relationship with the teachers in Phase I by also serving as a second reader of my transcripts, data, themes, and interpretations specifically for Phase I. The peer debriefer chosen for my study was "in every sense the inquirer's peer" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308): a doctoral student in the process of writing her own dissertation, my peer debriefer was familiar with the educational research and theory that related to my study, but had no relationship with the participants from Phase I. The peer debriefer and I communicated via email and I kept records of all communication to facilitate the audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Attention to the power differentials in Phase II was more problematic since I was an instructor working with students. I chose to address this power differential by accepting teachers who were not enrolled in my classes and not under my supervision for any reason, such as an internship, to participate in the study. It is my belief that working with me as a researcher/doctoral student, rather than instructor, lessened the power differential and ensured the teachers' feelings of safety and freedom during the focus groups. However, acceptance of and attention to this power differential was an important part of this focus group and this dissertation (Smulyan, 2004). I constantly reflected upon my demeanor, the phrasing of my questions, and how my expectations of the group were communicated to members to remain aware of the power differential that did exist.

Trustworthiness of the data collected was also addressed through tape recording and verbatim transcribing of the interviews (Munby, Lock, Hutchinson, Whitehead, & Martin, 1999); as mentioned previously, member checking of all transcripts occurred

prior to subsequent sessions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During analysis, attention to my biases and subjectivity contributed to study trustworthiness; I continually utilized a series of questions by Glesne and Peshkin (1992) to facilitate such attention, including, "Whom do I not see? Whom have I seen less often? Where do I not go? Where have I gone less often? With whom do I have special relationships, and in what light would they interpret phenomena?" as well as searching for "negative cases" to enhance trustworthiness (p. 147). When writing and communicating my findings, trustworthiness was accomplished through the use of "primary data" (Wolcott, 1990, p. 129).

Trustworthiness and accuracy of my interpretation of the data was addressed through member checking once again (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Drafts of sections of the dissertation pertaining to participants were emailed to all participants, as well as the final analysis and written product. Feedback from the participants concerning draft sections was used to clarify those sections. It was planned that feedback from the participants concerning the final product would be included in an epilogue to this dissertation; however, although I received confirmation from two participants that they had received and read the final copy, I did not receive feedback from any participants concerning the content of the dissertation and, therefore, there is no epilogue included in this dissertation.

Methodological Limitations of the Study

I feel that it is imperative to clearly state the methodological limitations of the study. First, in this study, I utilized focus group interviews as the primary method to

gather data; I did not, however, triangulate the data by methods such as interviewing other people about the teachers' stories or by observing the teachers at work. As Smulyan (2004), I ,too, "am dependent on the participants' framing of their own stories, their choice of what to say, their lenses for explaining the events and decisions in their lives" (p. 521). At the same time, I seek to raise questions about these stories, to connect them, and to engage them with the larger picture of teachers' lives. Such work creates "a tension between recognizing and acknowledging the voices of the participants and providing an analytic framework for interpreting that experience (Smulyan, 2004, p. 521).

Second, the relationships created among the participants and also me were an important component of finding common ground, creating safety, and forming shared knowledge. Such relationships and multiple positions are often seen in feminist research (Wolf, 1996); however, such relationships undoubtedly influence data and interpretation (Smulyan, 2004). For example, I consider many of the study participants my friends and I feel a connection to all of the study participants.

Third, as has been noted previously, due to the characteristics of the focus group members, the limited number of focus groups conducted, and the settings of the study, the findings from this dissertation will not and should not be generalized to a population (Flores & Alonso, 1995).

In the following Chapter Four, the overarching theme and supporting sub-themes of this study are explored. Drawn from the findings, these themes are presented in relation to the educational literature and also the categories identified from the data.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Through the focus group discussions, it appeared that the teachers equated advocacy with power. The areas in which they felt they had the most power, for example in their classrooms, were the areas in which the teachers took the most advocacy actions, for example on behalf of their classroom students. Advocacy actions taken on behalf of themselves and other teachers often seemed random and as I searched for the rhyme or reason behind the power that the teachers did exert, one significant theme emerged: "Ambivalence toward Power."

Ambivalence is defined as: "1. The coexistence of opposing attitudes or feelings, such as love and hate, toward a person, object, or idea; 2. Uncertainty or indecisiveness as to which course to follow" (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th ed., 2000). Ambivalence about power was exhibited by every teacher in the study, though not in the same ways or in the same situations. What is important about this finding is that it proposes that teachers do have power and that they utilize such power, ideas that run contrary to most of the literature that I reviewed. However, the teachers did not consistently access or utilize power and, in fact, they were often reluctant to access power and even resisted some forms of power.

In the data and findings that I present in this chapter, the overarching theme of "Ambivalence toward Power" is illustrated and supported by three sub-themes: "Power

and Resistance," "Negotiating Power," and "Reluctance to Access Power." Analysis of these data show that the ambivalence of the teachers toward power created an inconsistent and uneasy relationship with power, which in turn affected the teachers' advocacy on behalf of themselves and other teachers. Interpretation of these data revealed two related factors which affected the teachers' access and use of power: (1) the culture in which the participants were located (2) the discourse of professionalism.

I utilize the term culture in this dissertation to refer to the historical events, social norms and values that pervade the community and also the institution, or school, in which the participants were located. Researchers such as Acker (1990) and A. Hargreaves (1994) assert that both the community culture and the institutional culture affect teachers' perceptions and behaviors; findings in this study further support such assertions.

Both phases of this dissertation study took place in the southern United States, specifically Texas and Louisiana. Within these locations, I found overwhelming similarities in the community and institutional culture, but also some differences, both of which appeared to influence the participants' views and actions. For example, in Texas teacher unions do not have rights to collective bargaining or strikes. It is for this reason that the teachers in Phase I, who were located in Texas, discussed the situational differences between their state and other states in which unions have collective bargaining and strike rights. About this Maureen stated, "I have a teacher friend in California and their union is real. When they have a problem, they don't come to work" (2003, Int. 5, 63-64). Although the Phase II teachers were located in a state, Louisiana, in which unions have the right to collective bargaining and strikes, they also did not access

power through unions. Such data indicates influence from other aspects of the culture in which the teachers were located. Further, the positionality of the teachers in both phases of this study as white, Southern women also influenced their perception, access, and use of power. These ideas are discussed in detail throughout and concluding this chapter.

The second factor which affected the teachers' use of power is the discourse of professionalism, which worked within and around the situational context. The teachers in both phases of this study utilized the term profession, and the related term professional, in the commonly understood sense of the word, as "work which needs special training or a particular skill, often one which is respected because it involves a high level of education" (Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2003). The term profession has been used in education in the hopes of elevating the status, pay, and autonomy of teachers; however, I argue, as other researchers (see Dillabough, 1999; Cannella, 1997), that the discourse, the language which surrounds this concept and which "constructs knowledge and consequently limits alternative forms of knowledge" (Cannella, 1997, p. 13), of professionalism is based upon a patriarchal structure which actually serves to undermine teacher power through creating acceptable and expected roles and behaviors for teachers (Cannella, 1997) and conveying inconsistent messages to teachers about their knowledge and power. Again, these ideas are discussed in detail throughout and concluding this chapter.

The bulk of this chapter is devoted to exploring the three sub-themes of this study. In the chapter, each sub-theme is presented in the same way: an introduction to the sub-theme and supporting category, or categories; supporting data from Phase I; supporting

data from Phase II; and a discussion of the findings. In each discussion, I specifically relate the data from both phases to the educational literature and also to the overarching theme of this dissertation, Ambivalence toward Power. After the final sub-theme, I present a chapter summary, which pays specific attention to the culture in which the participants were located and the discourse of professionalism.

Emerging Sub-Themes and Categories

As the women discussed teacher power and teacher advocacy, as they shared their stories and experiences, I listened to, and sometimes also contributed, inconsistent and contrasting examples of and feelings about teacher power. Emerging from the participants' words are the sub-themes and categories that I present in this chapter. These sub-themes and categories illustrate the teachers' perceptions of teacher advocacy and activism through their feelings about, use of, and resistance to power. It is important to state that taken separately, the sub-themes and categories appear to present conflicting findings; taken together, they clearly illustrate the theme of Ambivalence toward Power.

The first sub-theme, "Power and Resistance," demonstrates the teachers' acceptance and use of power through two categories, "Becoming Teachers" and "Covert Power." The women's stories of becoming teachers were the first indication I received of the teachers' use of power and I was surprised to find similar stories and experiences within and across both focus groups. Once the women became teachers, they continued to utilized power and resistance, but in a different form. I termed this power "covert" due to the fact that the teachers often hid this power from other non-teacher adults.

The second sub-theme, “Negotiating Power,” illustrates the teachers’ desire to access and utilize power with those individuals they viewed as more powerful. The teachers instigated negotiations with these individuals in order to exert, garner, or combine power. The women in this study most often negotiated power with their principals, and, thus, this sub-theme is supported by a sole category, “Power and Principals.”

The third sub-theme, “Reluctance to Access Power,” illustrates the teachers’ resistance to possible sources or forms of power through two categories, “Unions” and “Personal Benefit.” Most of the teachers in this study seemed unsure about the role of unions, held wavering perceptions of unions, and, although they believed unions held power, exhibited reluctance to utilize this power. Additionally, the teachers exhibited resistance to power which did not bring personal benefit.

I view each sub-theme as a puzzle piece. Individually, each one contains its own picture and its own story. As I analyzed and interpreted the data from this study, I realized that I could have allowed any of these individual sub-themes to be the focus of my dissertation. Had I done so, this dissertation could have been about powerful teachers or about cooperative teachers or about powerless teachers; however, that picture would have been sorely inaccurate. The teachers in this study were all of those things. It is imperative that all three sub-themes are presented, along with the connections and contradictions between them and the meanings created by their totality. Together, the picture they construct is of teachers who are not powerful or powerless, but both; teachers

who both exercise and resist power; teachers who accept and refuse their situation; teachers who are diverse, complex, and evolving individuals.

Power and Resistance

Teachers as an occupational group, and as individuals, exhibit resistance to a variety of forces. For example, teachers' "overt and covert efforts" (Apple, 1985, p. 470) to resist externally imposed reforms and curriculum have been documented (Apple, 1985; Rusch & Perry, 1993). Such resistance has been at once demeaned and revered. For example, commenting on teachers' resistance to change in schools, Corbett, Firestone, and Rossman (1987) write, "Teachers have the reputation of being inherently and universally stubborn when facing change" (p. 36). Such statements depict teachers as spoiled children and reduce their acts of resistance to mere pettiness. Conversely, Apple (1985) sees these acts as "the resistance of a female work force against external incursions into the practices they had evolved over the years of labor" and further writes that "since women's work is so often the target of both rationalization and attempts to gain control over it, such attempts and the resistances to them become quite significant economically and politically, to say nothing of educationally, in schools" (p. 455). Apple's (1985) description seems to elevate teachers to the status of martyr, an ideal which has often been attached to teaching and has been the cause of major confusion concerning the status and professional goals of teachers (Lortie, 1975). This literature, though contradictory in nature, appears to support the idea of teacher power through

resistance. In this study, the women exercised power and resistance to first become teachers and then as teachers.

The first indication I received of the teachers' use of power was through their stories of becoming teachers. Though the women in this study were of varying ages, backgrounds, and locations, all who did not know each other prior to teaching or attending school together, they told of starkly similar experiences in becoming teachers. For example, all of the women utilized power to resist negative external influences and images in their decision to become teachers. These stories are important because they illustrate that the women acknowledged and exercised power.

Becoming Teachers

Deciding to become a teacher can be a difficult choice. Those who choose to teach are often told not just by family and friends, but sometimes even by other teachers, that we are not reaching our full potential (Smulyan, 2004). The choice to teach means confronting the knowledge that society views teaching as a less prestigious job, the reality that the wages will be far less than other professions, and sometimes the discouragement and disappointment from family and friends (Schultz et al., 2001). In light of these facts or outside influences, some individuals forsake teaching to pursue other career avenues either during college or afterwards. This may be viewed as a powerful decision because such individuals gain more prestige or money; however, for some, the desire to teach resurfaces enough times that they must try it. Many individuals,

including the women in this study, find, in spite of the image and economic reality of being a teacher, great satisfaction in the profession (Coeyman, 1998).

Through this research project, I have come to view the choice to teach as a powerful choice and, sometimes, as a form of resistance. Other researchers are also beginning to explore this idea. Smulyan (2004), drawing on her personal experience and the experiences of her teacher education students, writes that although "these women had to respond to the pressures of significant others and to social and cultural constrictions of teaching that seemed to degrade or disparage the career" (p. 531), they "chose to teach, because they saw teaching as an important and even powerful, role in society" (p. 530). The participants in my research project resonated these experiences and ideas through discussions of their decisions to become teachers.

Phase I Teachers

As Smulyan's (2004) participants, all of the teachers in this research project made the decision to become a teacher in spite of negative influences of some kind. Specific to the Phase I participants, Maureen and Carol entered college in the 1970s during a time when professional opportunities for women had begun to broaden; deciding to become teachers, they faced backlash from peers and friends who questioned why they would choose such a traditional role. Maureen recalled, "Nurses and teachers in particular were considered the typical women careers and …if you became a teacher, you were really kind of considered to be settling instead of going out and becoming a real professional" (2003, Int. 2, 26-28). Although Maureen was influenced by these forces and pursued a

career in business before becoming a teacher, Carol remained steadfast in her goal to become a teacher "because I knew I would be good at it, because it was a passion" (2003, Int. 2, 159-160).

The two other women in Phase I were also discouraged from becoming teachers; ironically enough, they were discouraged by other teachers. Bev recalled how a teacher she admired in high school told her she was "too smart to be a teacher" (2003, Int. 2, 48-49). Jill's parents, both teachers, cautioned her that teaching "is not easy. This is hard work and just know that it's going to be a struggle" financially (2003, Int. 2, 52-54). Though all four of these women confronted discouragement from peers, family, or teachers, they all ultimately became teachers. Through our discussions, the women expounded on their reasons for becoming teachers and the ways in which teaching positively affected their lives.

Carol, Bev, and Jill entered teaching because they felt that it was extremely important work. Carol believed that "our profession [teaching] is most noble and so key to what's going to happen to our country and the world" (2003, Int. 1, 50-51). This statement is illustrative of the ways in which these teachers both resisted and assimilated commonly held beliefs about teaching. For example, elementary teaching is often considered noble because it is built upon the expectations of women's self-sacrifice (Acker, 1995) and has even been described as more of "a moral obligation" than a job (Acker, 1987, p. 95). These teachers, like many others, entered and remained in teaching for intrinsic (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Papanastasiou & Papanastasiou, 1997) and altruistic (Bastick, 2000; Schultzet al., 2001) motives. The women utilized terms like

"profession" to emphasize the importance of their work. Although the "professionalization of education" is viewed critically by some researchers because it cultivates "patriarchal power over both women and children" (Cannella, 1997, p. 138), the teachers in this study used the term in the commonly understood sense of the word to lift themselves and their job to the status that they felt it should be. For these teachers, there should be and there was respect in performing "a valuable job and service" (Jill, personal communication, June 23, 2004); the idea that they are "performing an essential service that no one else is willing to perform" (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986, p. 511) can be rewarding for teachers.

Maureen, a second career teacher, also discussed altruistic reasons for entering teaching; however, she cited the "perceived personal benefits" (Chambers, 2002, p. 212) of teaching as just as important, or more important, than intrinsic motives concerning her decision to enter teaching. Utilizing characteristics of second career teachers developed by Crow, Levine, and Nager (1990), Maureen would be considered "converted," among second career teachers who enter teaching because a "pivotal event or confluence of factors cause them to reconsider professional plans" (Crow et al., 1990, p. 207). For Maureen, it was a "confluence of factors" that led her to teaching: a job which was unsatisfying and overly demanding coupled with the birth of her first child, which ultimately led to child care problems and marital clashes. Maureen stated that the "quick answer" to why she became a teacher "is because I thought it would be easy" (personal communication, July 12, 2004).

Although teaching did not turn out to be an easy job for her – I found through our discussions that Maureen kept some of the longest hours of any of the teachers, often working late nights during the week and on the weekends – Maureen remained in teaching. She did so because she received the benefits she wanted from teaching: a daily schedule similar to her children's schedule, time off on holidays and in the summer to be with her family, and the satisfaction that her job now brought her. Such benefits relate both to Maureen's personal and professional goals and her positionality as a wife and mother. By becoming a teacher, Maureen was able to successfully balance her roles as wife and mother with a career in which she felt successful and satisfied. When I asked Maureen to respond to obvious discrepancy between her original perception of teaching and the reality of her job, she stated, "I stayed because I loved it" (personal communication, July 12, 2004).

Maureen's experiences in becoming a second career teacher and her unique comfort level with teacher advocacy and activism in her group, as discussed in Chapter 1, influenced the formation of the second focus group. Because I sought to explore whether second career teachers were more comfortable with ideas and actions related to teacher advocacy and activism, all of the teachers in the second phase of the study were second career teachers. Although I did not find a correlation between second career teachers and greater comfort levels with advocacy and activism, I was surprised by what I did find: all of the teachers in Phase II shared similar experiences in their pursuit to become teachers with not only Maureen, but with all of the other women in Phase I. And all of these women, as well, utilized power and resistance to become teachers.

Phase II Teachers

Like the women in Phase I, the women in Phase II also resisted negative influences from peers, friends, family, and teachers to become teachers. Leslie's aunt, a teacher for 28 years, told her that in teaching "you don't make any money, the kids are horrible; it is stressful" (2004, Int. 5, 388-389). Responding to this influence, Leslie changed her major only to return to college several years later to become a teacher. Sara and Diane also had to return to college to pursue teaching because, although both were interested in becoming teachers as undergraduate students, they initially choose careers which they and their families believed would offer greater financial gains. Referring again to the categories developed by Crow, Levine, and Nager (1990), all of the teachers in Phase II would be described as "homecomers," second career teachers "who see teaching as a return to a career they had always hoped to enter" (Chambers, 2002, p. 212).

Like Maureen, dissatisfactions with stressful and restrictive jobs and issues like having time with their young children led the women to teaching; however, unlike Maureen, the women in Phase II purposefully entered teaching in an effort to achieve both job satisfaction and personal benefits. Diane shared her inner thoughts on her decision to pursue teaching: "I'm thinking to myself, 'You know, if I went back to school, I could get paid a decent wage and I could do something I love" (2004, Int. 2, 75-77). Diane's desire to do something she loved was echoed time and again by the other women in Phase II: Sara stated, "I love being back in school" (2004, Int. 1, 28) and, about her first year teaching, Leslie said, "I loved it" (2004, Int. 3, 59-60). For women

who described their previous work as, “It was just a job thing. It was drudgery and it was a lot of stress and I didn’t look forward to getting up in the morning to go” (Diane, 2004, Int. 2, 62-63), these words of “love” were significant.

Balanced with the intrinsic benefits of teaching for the women in Phase II were the external benefits. Sara, Diane, and Leslie, who previously worked in professions which required 50-60 hour work weeks at an office, all welcomed a job that required shorter hours on site. Although acknowledging that they often did much of their prep work for teaching outside of school, as reported by other teachers (Chissom, 1987; Naylor & Schaefer, 2002; “Who We Are…”, 2003), these teachers appreciated being able to do such work on their own clock. “Time,” stated Diane, “is such a precious thing. It is probably more valuable to me now than money” (2004, Int. 5, 350-351). All of the teachers in Phase II agreed with Diane’s statement. This statement runs contradictory to the pervasive idea that making more money supersedes other job aspects. Thus, though these women were viewed by family, friends, peers, and others as giving up power to become teachers, the women felt that they garnered greater power over their lives and their priorities by becoming teachers.

Discussion

Despite discouragement, despite the perceptions and the possible financial hardship of the teaching profession, the women in this study consciously chose to become teachers. On the surface and to the individuals surrounding these women, it may appear that the women were sacrificing their potential, giving up greater financial gain and

status, and, in essence, choosing to be powerless; however, taken from a different perspective – a perspective that these teachers maintained and that I came to view as well – by resisting the negative messages about teaching, these women exerted power and were able to choose a career that was both satisfying to them and offered them special benefits, a departure from the norm idea that to teach is to sacrifice (Acker, 1987; Taylor, 1986; "Who We Are…", 2003).

That entering teaching is a powerful choice contradicts the majority of literature that views women's decision to enter teaching as based upon historical and societal norms, including teaching as an acceptable and natural job for women, ie. "women's work" (see Acker, 1995, 1987; Gannerud, 2001; Green & Weaver, 1992; Steedman, 1990); however, Smulyan (2004) points out, and I concur, that it is possible to view the choice to enter teaching as powerful, "to see women as agents (rather than victims) who make autonomous choices about their lives and careers" (p. 516). So, while I acknowledge the "imposition of social expectations and norms" (Smulyan, 2004, p. 516) that influence women's decision to teach, I focus the majority of my attention and discussion on the power the women both garnered and exercised to become teachers. I do this in an effort to share and explore unrecognized, undocumented examples and stories of teacher power.

To become teachers, the women in this study utilized power and resisted strong influences. The teachers first resisted negative pressure from family, friends, peers, and even other teachers. The women's experiences in this area align with the sources and types of influence discussed by Schultz, et al. (2001), who found that family, teachers,

and peers provide influences in the "form of encouragement, discouragement, modeling, suggesting, or exposing" (p. 306) in the formation of the goal to become a teacher. Related to power, Schultz, et. al. (2001) comment on an individual's "sense of being in control" (p. 305) when responding to these influences. The idea of being in control of one's own situation or destiny was reflected in the women's conscious alignment of teaching with their personal and professional goals; Eccles (1994) found that women who consciously choose careers which integrate and balance their life roles, values, and goals often benefit in "both their physical health and the quality of their lives" (p. 605). For example, Leslie gained a greater sense of control over her life when she became a teacher because she enjoyed her job, made an amount of money that was acceptable to her and provided enough income for her family, gained time with her family, and experienced improved health.

The women also resisted the idea that greater money equals greater satisfaction. Acker (1987) writes that "the teacher's sense of well-being comes less from community status, or financial gain, or colleague approval" (p. 85) than from intrinsic reward. This is only partially true for the women in this study. Although all of the women entered teaching knowing that they would receive significantly smaller salaries that other degreed professions, they felt that both the altruistic and external benefits outweighed the lack of financial compensation. The decision of two of the second career teachers to enter teaching speaks most powerfully to the women's will and conviction: both Maureen and Diane entered teaching at almost half the salary they received in their previous jobs. Such a decision stuns most people, but teaching gave Maureen and Diane a sense of

control over what was important to them in their lives. Both of the women entered teaching because they believed there were more important things in life than money; as other women, they accepted lower salaries to address higher priorities (Eccles, 1994).

Finally, the women resisted the generally accepted idea that they were settling for less, or sacrificing, by becoming teachers. Although, as discussed in the previous paragraph, the women acknowledged that would receive less money as teachers than in many other professions, they resisted the idea that they were settling as teachers for two reasons: (1) they valued the profession of teaching and (2) they believed that they gained more than they lost as teachers. For example, several of the women gained time and, even though the women did not like the fact that individuals outside the teaching profession perceived their job as easy because they "get summers off" (Bev, 2003, Int. 4, 136), all of the teachers took advantage of the opportunities offered by such as schedule. Several of the women coordinated their daily schedules with their children's so that they were able to spend more time with their family each day; additionally, four of the seven participants attended graduate school and all of the women attended some sort of continuing education during the summer.

To become teachers, these women resisted external influences and pervasive perceptions of teachers. The women felt powerful in their decision to teach because their occupation gave them personal satisfaction, as well as provided concrete benefits. The stories the women told of becoming teachers is the first puzzle piece that forms the picture of the teachers' ambivalence toward power. This piece illustrates the women's conscious decision to accept and utilize personal and professional power. The women

felt comfortable and confident in the use of this power and, though several of the women exhibited indecisiveness about becoming teachers and initially pursued other careers, they did so because they believed that those careers would bring them more power over their lives in the form of greater financial freedom or status. When this did not occur, the women utilized power again to change their career and become teachers. The data presented here is a clear indication of the women's positive perception of and resolve to utilize power. In and of itself, these data do not support the theme of Ambivalence toward Power; however, further sub-themes and categories present data which conflicts with the idea that the teachers accept and use power. As each sub-theme and category is explored, it will become apparent that the one thread that links them together is ambivalence about power.

After they became teachers, the women continued to utilize power and resistance for themselves and other teachers. However, this power and resistance was different. Through our discussions, I realized that there was an understood, but not named, power that the teachers perceived and utilized. All of the teachers had knowledge of this power before entering the focus group. The power was a secret that teachers shared and was hidden from principals, parents, and other non-teacher individuals. Because of these characteristics, I labeled this power "covert."

Covert Power

In the past, such instances of covert power may have been written off as examples of the individualism and isolation sometimes created by teachers (Hargreaves, A., 1994).

Multiple reasons for this isolation have been suggested by researchers: Grumet (1988) sees teachers "hiding" in their classrooms so as not to teach mandated curriculum; Erdman (1990) believes teachers create isolation due to their lack of power concerning policy; and A. Hargreaves (1994) questions whether teachers isolate themselves for privacy, protection, fear, or all of these. Though this literature may be entirely accurate in its representation of individual teachers, it does not acknowledge or report the communication among teachers concerning such power. The teachers in this study did not only practice covert power behind closed doors, but practiced it with and for other teachers.

In fact, the women discussed the covert power utilized by teachers as though it were a well-known and accepted source of power among teachers. Moreover, the women described how they learned covert power from other teachers and would only begin to utilize it when they felt that they had earned the right to do so. Exercising this power was one way that the teachers again resisted external influences and advocated for both themselves and their students.

Phase I Teachers

Describing such covert power, Carol said, "I am the master of my own ship" (2003, Int. 4, 246). Carol's statement indicates that she understood and was comfortable using power in her school context. As an experienced teacher within this context, Carol had knowledge of and experience in the protocol and steps to take to garner power. Specific to covert power, Carol and the other teachers in Phase I deliberately claimed

such power and supported each other both with covert power and in using covert power. Such support created an invisible infrastructure that facilitated teacher power and advocacy.

Jill alluded to this infrastructure when she described how "Kindergarten's worked out a very professional system of coverage for each other" (2003, Int. 1, 339). This statement referred to the fact that the teachers left and covered class for each other without administrative permission. Whether it was running to the bathroom or going to a doctor's appointment, the teachers made the decision to combine classes in order to advocate for the needs of a fellow teacher. The teachers also used covert power to make curricular changes.

Maureen described such a situation in her former classroom:

> When I was in Kindergarten, it became a school rule that kids couldn't have Pokemon cards. Well, my kids were reading like crazy from those Pokemon cards and I thought that was a really appropriate Kindergarten activity. Those little kids didn't care anything about 'Mr. M' wanted to know what letter was on that card and how to say that name. So, we just had the rule that you could have Pokemon in our room, but you could never see them outside. So, it's kind of like, 'Okay, I'm not going to ask [the principal] if it's okay for me' (2003, Int. 4, 234-239).

This appeared to be one of Maureen's first recognitions of using covert power. She describes how another teacher, Carol, accepted and encouraged this power: "Actually, [Carol] was the one…because I came up and said, 'Can I still have Pokemon in my

class?' And she said, 'Well, just don't mention it'" (2003, Int. 4, 239-241). Additionally, Maureen not only utilized covert power to change her curriculum, she also had her students utilize covert power. By initiating the students into teachers' use of covert power at such an early age, Maureen further built the infrastructure that supported the teachers' power and decision making. The teachers spoke openly about these situations and appeared comfortable with this power. They also described how other teachers influenced their initial use of this power.

Maureen described her transition to utilizing covert power: "That was an important lesson that I learned from [Carol]…If you ask, you have to be prepared to be told no. So, if you just don't ask, you keep it in your room and if they find out, you act surprised…You have to choose the things that you're going to go out and really ask about because you may be told no and have to live with that" (2003, Int. 4, 242-249). Although in the previous quote, Maureen alludes to the idea that she would accept an administrator's decision irregardless of whether she agreed with it, she and the other teachers in Phase I did not always follow the principal's edicts.

In fact, the teachers discussed that they were prepared to make the classroom changes they felt necessary with or without principal approval. And they celebrated this. For example, Carol stated that although she had approached her principal to change a schedule, she and her teaching team members "would have solved the problems" (2003, Int. 5, 145) with or without the principal's consent. About this resistance, Maureen said, "Well, see I love that you just said [that]…So you do feel empowered that you would make those changes and you would make it work for your class and for yourself whether

he [the principal] approved the changes or not" (2003, Int. 4, 150-152). Remarks such as these showed me that although the teachers did not like the images or reputations associated with power seeking activists, they did desire power and would take it if they felt strongly enough about the cause.

Such covert power was important to the teachers because they also felt it facilitated "meeting the needs of your classroom" (Jill, 2003, Int. 4, 251). This idea relates to Apple's (1986) belief that teachers "struggle for working conditions that provide autonomy to conceptualize, not merely execute, the tasks of teaching" (in Erdman, 1990, p. 176). For these teachers, when they felt that they could not assert their power or that they would experience diminished power due to such assertion, they utilized covert power to achieve their goals. As Carol stated,

> I have to say in empowering oneself, you have to be proactive for yourself. You can't just assume you're going to be empowered by waiting around for people to empower you. You have to take the bull by the horns and empower yourself (2003, Int. 4, 136-139).

The teachers in Phase I utilized several forms of power, including covert power, to "empower" themselves. The teachers in Phase II appeared less comfortable empowering themselves.

Phase II Teachers

Even the less experienced teachers from Phase II could describe examples of covert power, though they felt unable to grasp it for themselves. For example, Leslie

detailed how experienced teachers bend or break school rules to fulfill personal needs: "Most of the teachers up there [at school], they just leave when it's time for their doctors appointments and they dole out their kids to other classes…Well, a lot of teachers who have been there for a longer time, they can just leave and they can come back when their doctor's appointment is over, and it is *very* common. But, it's those teachers who have been there 10, 15 years" (2004, Int. 4, 297-302). Leslie added, "You can say they are advocating for themselves" (2004, Int. 4, 306). Leslie's example correlates with how the teachers from Phase I utilized their covert power for themselves and other teachers.

Leslie also described how the same teachers at her school break school rules to fulfill professional needs: "If their students start acting up, we are not supposed to use our cell phones, but we do. People like me, I would get in trouble. But there are teachers that I know; I have walked into their rooms and they are passing the cell phone around to the different students…calling home and calling parents" (2004, Int. 4, 306-309). Leslie felt that there would be repercussions if she utilized covert power because she was newer and uncertified. "Once I have my certification…I will be a whole different person on the food chain," she said (2004, Int. 4, 317-318). Leslie did not recognize that she had already grasped some of this power.

For example, Leslie utilized covert power to make curriculum decisions in her classroom even when her decisions conflicted with the views of some community and school members. Her decision regarded the teaching of Black History. She described: "Around Martin Luther King Day, we spent the week talking about him [Martin Luther King, Jr.] and about halfway through, one of my little white boys raised his hand and

said, 'My daddy said Martin Luther King was the worst man that ever lived. He wished he had been shot a long time ago'" (2004, Int. 6, 284-287). Not only did Leslie's teaching conflict with some parental views, her decision was also in conflict with other "white teachers that won't even discuss it [Black History] in February" (2004, Int. 6, 295). To this Leslie stated, "I just feel like if I am going to be in a black school, I need to teach about their role models" (2004, Int. 6, 307-308). Leslie's decision to teach culturally relevant material to her students was not mandated by her school district or state; Leslie made the decision based on what she felt was appropriate and important for her students. Leslie utilized covert power to resist external influences which she felt negatively affected her teaching and her students. As Leslie, other "teachers report great possibilities for influencing activities in the classroom, but, at the same time, they feel that they have very little influence over contextual factors and the external framing of these activities" (Gannerud, 2001, p. 64).

However, it is interesting to note that Leslie did not identify her own use of covert power. This may be because, in her perception, she utilized such power for her students; nevertheless, I believe that this is probably the first step in the teachers' use of covert power. For example, Maureen from Phase I first utilized power to break school rules and change her curriculum to accommodate her students; when she was successful and received acceptance and encouragement from a more experienced teacher, Carol, in utilizing such power, Maureen continued to exert covert power and also exerted such power for herself and other teachers. In Leslie's situation, if she is successful in her use of covert power and if she is accepted by the other teachers in her school, she will

probably continue to exert covert power and extend such power to address her needs and the needs of other teachers.

Like Leslie, both Sara and Diane felt unable to exercise covert power, but did for their students. For example, Sara "brought politics" (2004, Int. 6, 331) into her classroom in an effort to "change their [students'] perceptions about how they really feel about…the war and everything" (2004, Int. 6, 335-336). The teachers in both phases utilized covert power with students. Such actions, in the teachers' views, addressed student needs, but these actions also continued to build the invisible infrastructure which supported the teachers' use of covert power. It is very likely that the invisible infrastructure set up by the teachers and with their students supported much more than just meeting the needs of the teachers, such as bathroom breaks, or meeting the needs of the students, such as studying topics of their interest; this infrastructure could very well serve to undermine the massive external forces seen in elementary schools right now, such as standardized testing and mandated curriculum.

That these teachers in Phase II did not perceive their use of power in such instances seemed to relate to both their reluctance to access power, a sub-theme presented later in this chapter, and also their status as inexperienced teachers. A complicating factor was the fact that they so often cited their status as new teachers that I questioned how often this status led to lack of knowledge and how often they utilized this label as an excuse.

Discussion

Probably the most important question that stems from this category is, why do teachers use covert power? Why don't they just exert overt power in the situations in which they need it? As stated previously, educational literature often describes teachers who utilize covert power as isolating themselves (Acker, 1995; Hargreaves, A., 1994). Teachers who create such isolation are sometimes referred to as hiding (Grumet, 1988) in their classrooms or retreating (Erdman, 1990) to their classrooms in "response to their lack of power to influence school or district policies" (Acker, 1995, p. 30). Certainly this was the case with the teachers in this study who felt they were constantly being given new curriculum to implement with little or no input into the curriculum. For example, during the study, the Phase II teachers were given a new model curriculum by their district to implement. Sara commented, "What they [the school district] have done is taken standards and benchmarks and then made it very, very precise" (2004, Int. 5, 16-17) leaving little room for teacher discretion. Such pre-packaged curriculum works to deskill teachers (Acker, 1990), forces them to choose between the individual needs of their students and maintaining the pace of the expected curriculum, and "reduces the need for interaction between teachers, thus contributing to greater isolation" (Acker, 1990, p. 261).

Related to this, other researchers believe that "isolation is an adaptive strategy because it protects the time and energy required to meet immediate instructional demands" (Flinders, 1988, p. 25). Creating isolation seemed to be one way that the teachers in this study advocated not just for their students, but also for themselves. Carol

stated, “I’m just saying, there’s no time, if teachers have any odd minutes on their hands someone is going to assume that you haven’t pulled your share of the load and they are going to give you something else to do” (2003, Int. 6, 127-129). By isolating themselves, the teachers could make the decisions they felt were best for their students, protect themselves from negative reactions from principals or parents concerning their curriculum decisions, and preserve any precious time they had during the school day.

Though the teachers in this study created isolation between themselves and non-teacher adults to utilize covert power, they cited isolation from other teachers as a hindrance to their power and felt that communication with other teachers facilitated greater and collective power. For example, the teachers in this study who regularly met with their teaching teams seemed to fulfill what A. Hargreaves (1994) terms “collaborative culture,…pervasive collaborative working relationships among teachers which are both social and task-centered in nature” (p. 135). Concerning such communication, A. Hargreaves (1994) found that

> collaboration, in its strongest forms, enables teachers to interact more confidently and assertively with their surrounding systems and the multiplicity of reasonable and unreasonable innovations and reforms that come from them. Collaboration strengthens the confidence to adopt externally introduced innovations, the wisdom to delay them and the moral fortitude to resist them, where appropriate (p. 246).

If this is true, then it would seem that increased communication among teachers would decrease the need for and use of covert power. And that was the case in this study.

The teachers who met regularly with their colleagues felt more powerful and also utilized their collective nature to exert overt power. Sara stated, "Through our teaming we plan…we each work together…[and] talk about whatever problems we're having…It is very empowering" (2004, Int. 7, 179-183). Nias (1989) found through such communication, teachers develop relationships that "confirmed the goals and aspirations of otherwise isolated individuals, kept them from leaving their schools, supported them in innovation or retrenchment, deepened their satisfaction, and fueled their discontents" (p. 51). Related to this, Jill described how the Kindergarten teachers' found a common concern through their communication; then exerted collective power to influence the situation. Working with her teaching team, she described, "We expressed our concerns…we expressed it more than once and Carol wrote it down for him [the principal]…and apparently he heard what we said" (2003, Int. 4, 21-25). Jill described this as "a good experience" (2003, Int. 4, 20); pleased with the outcome, both she and the other teachers felt that lobbying as a teaching team was an accepted form of advocacy. This finding coupled with the fact that the teachers desired greater and more frequent communication with other teachers indicates that the teachers did not necessarily desire to utilize isolation and covert power, but that they, as other teachers, rather felt forced to do so in response to bureaucratic control (Acker, 1995).

Related to the theme of ambivalence about power, the category of "Covert Power" is the second puzzle piece, which begins to illustrate the teachers' uneasy and inconsistent relationship with power. The data show that the teachers desired power to make changes both for their students and for themselves, that they utilized covert power

to do so, and that they resisted imposed rules or regulations that they saw as inappropriate or unfair through such power; however, the teachers had conflicting feelings about such power and they did not exercise this power consistently. Significant findings include that the teachers learned covert power from other teachers; that they were only comfortable utilizing covert power after they felt they had "earned" the right to do so; that this discomfort did not stop them from using covert power, just from identifying it; and that though increased communication among teachers facilitated covert power, it also decreased the use of covert power. For example, the fact that the teachers in Phase II utilized covert power, but could not, or would not, name it demonstrates their discomfort with identifying instances in which they exercised power. These findings illustrate inconsistencies in the teachers' feelings about and actions of power and are another piece of the picture that identifies the teachers' ambivalence toward power.

Negotiating Power

When teachers step outside of their classroom, they often must share or negotiate power with other adults. In this study, the teachers most often negotiated power with administrators, mainly their principals. The teachers actively instigated these negotiations in order to exert power, to garner power, or to combine power; however, the teachers also experienced diminished power in these negotiations or in negotiations instigated by the principals.

Power and Principals

Although "many teachers see themselves in an ambiguous position vis-à-vis the principal," (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986, p. 509), all of the teachers in this study viewed their relationship with their principal as a source of power or as an outlet for exercising power, though at times this relationship also inhibited the power of teachers. Often, the teachers approached their principal in an advocacy role – be it for students or themselves and other teachers.

Much of the literature concerning teachers, principals, and power focuses on the principal's power and the possibility of the principal sharing power with, or "empowering" (Blase, 2001; Duhon, 1999; Gonzales & Short, 1996), teachers. Such a view minimizes the idea of teacher power and disregards the fact that teachers often approach principals with power or assert themselves to gain power, rather than merely accepting power when offered. The teachers from Phase I illustrated this.

Phase I Teachers

As the teachers in Phase I described interactions with principals, it became apparent that they were familiar with and could utilize a process to exert or garner power. Carol described the process that she and the other Kindergarten teachers utilized:

> So, to take out any possibility that he [the principal] might not hear what we said not only did we talk to him at planning period, but I emailed him and I went in personally and then we wrote out and handed it to him and made him take it with

him – what a good schedule would look like for early childhood kids with natural breaks throughout the day (2003, Int. 4, 133-136).

The process that Carol explained seems absolutely redundant; however, Carol and the other Kindergarten teachers were successful in this endeavor. Carol led her teaching team through this deliberate process to exert power based upon her knowledge of the institutional culture in her school and past successes exerting power with this principal. Although to most outsiders this process may seem at once demeaning and ridiculous, Carol knew and utilized the protocol and steps to garner and exert power in this situation. Additionally, she showed other teachers, her teaching team, how to successfully exert power in this school.

One reason that the teachers were willing to approach their principal with this process was because they knew they could be successful based upon Carol's knowledge and past experiences. A second reason that the teachers were willing to approach their principal with this process was the climate that existed between the teachers and himself; the teachers attributed this climate to the principal. For example, Maureen felt "that [this principal] is the best administrator I've ever known as far as being open and really trying to let things have a chance" (2003, Int. 3, 268-269). That principals have a large role in creating the climate of the school is well documented (Freiberg, 1998; Harris & Lowery, 2002; Norton, 2002/2003); however, the teachers also played a role in influencing, maintaining, or changing this climate, regardless of whether or not they accepted responsibility for this.

Positive experiences with power and the principal paved the way for continued advocacy. For example, Jill's experience with her principal concerning the change in Kindergarten schedule was one of the first experiences she had in approaching her principal as an advocate. She described it: "We had a good experience last week with [the principal] which turned out to be good experience, but we didn't know going into it if it was going to be good or not. We expressed our concerns about next year's schedule …And apparently he heard what we said and allowed us to have a similar schedule to what we have this year so that was good" (2003, Int. 4, 20-26). The positive response from Jill's principal ensured that Jill would feel comfortable approaching him in the future with issues that are important to her students, her colleagues, and herself. It is important to note that although Jill actively sought to exert power, she ultimately viewed the principal as having more power; this is indicated by her previous statement that the principal "allowed" the Kindergarten team to have the schedule they requested. Such statements allude to the teachers' ambivalence about power.

Although the teachers in Phase I felt that their principal was often open to hearing and adapting to their ideas or needs, they also experienced diminished power due to his actions or inactions. For example, Maureen received lower scores – "proficient" rather than "exceeds expectations" – from the principal on her Professional Development Appraisal System summative evaluation due to the fact that she often voiced her opinions and concerns about school issues, even though the principal stated to Maureen that her input "adds a lot of richness to our staff" (2003, Int. 4, 41). The mixed messages that Maureen received from her principal concerning power left Maureen feeling confused

and “like he wants you talk, but then at the same time not” (2003, Int. 4, 45-46). Aware of the inconsistency in the principal’s words and actions, Maureen confronted him: “And he said, ‘Well, I really respect all of you [teachers].’ And I said, ‘But that’s just a perception’” (2003, Int. 4, 60-61).

Maureen’s behavior in this situation showed that she was willing to accept certain consequences for her use of power. The other teachers were also willing to do this. For example, about her performance evaluation, Jill stated that she didn’t mind receiving “proficient” scores due to her use of power “as long as I don’t have to go to some kind of class, remedial work or something” (2003, Int. 4, 120). Although these teachers were willing to receive less than perfect marks in exchange for exerting power, they did not find it satisfactory to receive below average scores. This indicates that they wanted to continue to be viewed as “good teachers” regardless of whether they agreed with the assessor or the assessment. Such desires directly affected their ambivalence toward power and were reinforced by both their positionality and the discourse of professionalism which situate the teachers in roles such as good teachers, good mothers, good wives, and good daughters.

These women were aware of and accepted the inconsistent climate created by their principal. They seemed to view their situation as a shared power of “we win some, he wins some.” This type of “informal exchange of favors” (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986, p. 509) between teachers and principals, and illustrated by the teachers in Phase I, has historically been a staple of school culture. The teachers were comfortable with this exchange of power and seemed to think that it was fair. For example, even though the

teachers in Phase I wanted the principal to institute flexible work hours at their school, they saw and accepted this as an area in which the principal desired to maintain power. Maureen stated, "I think he feels like that [work hours] is one thing he has control over everybody because he doesn't in other situations" (2003, Int. 4, 63-64). Clearly these teachers were willing to assert themselves, though their philosophy remained to carefully answer, "Which battles are you going to pick with your administrator?" (Jill, 2003, Int. 4, 77).

Phase II Teachers

Because the teachers in Phase II all taught at different schools, the stories of their principals varied. For these teachers, the climate that the principal initiated between the teachers and the principal totally dictated whether or not the teachers would assert themselves for power. Like the teachers in Phase I, positive experiences with a principal facilitated advocacy actions; unfortunately, the teachers in Phase II more often told of negative experiences that hindered or stopped all together power negotiations with principals.

For example, being a new teacher, Sara had questions and concerns but did not feel that she could request help from her former principal saying, "It depends on a lot of what is going on with your own administration. Last semester, I wouldn't have asked anybody at that school for anything except other teachers. Any of the teachers in my hall would give me anything that I needed, the shirt off of their back. I did not feel that way about the administration" (2004, Int. 5, 286-290). When Sara's school received a new

principal mid-year, the climate changed. Sara described the difference, "With my old principal, I wouldn't have [approached her], but with my new one, I mean you can talk to her. She may not be able to fix it, but she is extremely approachable, and if she thinks that a solution can be worked out she is ready to find a solution… I have been able to talk about having different classes, having smaller classes, changing the way the schedule is. Whether it is even in the realm of possibilities doesn't matter, because [she is] so receptive to wanting to make it better for everybody" (2004, Int. 7, 387-389; Int. 5, 290-293).

Sara quickly became an advocate for herself and others when her relationship with her principal changed. Although it would be easy to say that Sara's power depended upon her principal, I do not see that as being the case. I believe that Sara viewed one avenue of power negotiations – with her principal – as closed until she received a new and more open principal. As an inexperienced teacher, Sara sought out the only other avenue of power of which she was aware: more experienced fellow teachers. Throughout the study, Sara became aware of additional avenues for power and advocacy that the other teachers in the group used. For example, Leslie's experience with the negative climate created by her principal led Leslie to bypass her principal and negotiate power with her assistant administrator concerning advocacy issues.

Leslie's principal had set up such an extremely intimidating and closed atmosphere that teachers rarely even communicated with her. Leslie described the situation: "I have never been in her office before, never. Most teachers haven't unless they have been there a long, long time. I have never been in her office. If I leave her a

note, if any of us [teachers] write notes to her, we don't get responses…I have stood in her door to go get a child that she had of mine in there, but I have never been in her office before" (2004, Int. 7, 393-409). Because of the climate created by the principal, Leslie said, "We [teachers] don't go to her" (2004, Int. 4, 397). However, when Leslie needed to advocate for her student and herself due to a parent conflict, she sought the help of another administrator, the assistant principal.

She described how she "tried to get a conference with one particular child's parent five times and the parents didn't show up. The assistant principal has been helping me and he and I finally got dad up to school the other day" (2004, Int. 4, 283-284). Rather than allow her principal's actions, or inactions, to limit her power, Leslie searched for another ally with whom to combine power, and found one in her assistant principal, to help her solve a professional problem. Leslie's behavior indicated that even new teachers quickly learn the protocol and steps to take in their school culture if they want to exercise power. Leslie deliberately circumvented her principal and combined power with her assistant principal. Though Leslie's process was not nearly as detailed as the process described by Carol in Phase I, Leslie clearly is on her way to gaining the knowledge and experience necessary to lead herself and other teachers in exerting power with administrators.

However, the teachers in Phase II were not always able to sidestep their principals' acts that diminished teacher power. Through the stories of the teachers in Phase II, I found that not only can principals suppress communication with and advocacy by their teachers through the climate they create, principals can also undermine the

authority and power that teachers already possess through their actions. During the study, the teachers in Phase II were in the midst of such a situation. The situation concerned a bond issue that the city proposed in order to update school facilities, provide school resources, and raise salaries for school central administration personnel. Even though many teachers and at least one teachers union opposed the bond, Sara described how the district principals "force us [teachers] to hand out sheets to all of the students to take to their parents to say this is how our school will benefit" (2004, Int. 5, 87-89). Diane additionally described that the principals also asked teachers to attend a rally for the bond; she quoted her principal as stating, "The press will be there. They are thinking that teachers are all against this. So, go over there" (2004, Int. 6, 89-90). The principals used their position and collective power to lessen teachers' individual power in their classrooms and schools and also the collective power of the teachers' union, a primary outlet for teacher advocacy and activism.

Though the teachers in Phase II appeared to deal with more conflict and confusion concerning their relationships with their principals and their power as teachers, it seems apparent that when the need for advocacy arose, the teachers sought to negotiate power outside of their classroom, often approaching those they viewed as having more power, be it more experienced teachers or administrators. As newer teachers in their schools, these teachers laid low for a while before pursuing power; however, Diane stated, "Now that I know a little more the lay of the land, I would go to [the principal]." She believed, "If you want something done, he is the one to talk to" (2004, Int. 7, 454-456). Diane's statements indicate that she had begun to grasp the protocol and contextual situation of

her school. With such knowledge, Diane felt more confidence, and is more likely to experience success, in entering into a process to garner, exert, or combine power.

Discussion

The diversity in relationships that the teachers in this study had with their principals and the variableness in both the messages about power the teachers received from their principals – and communicated to their principals – and the power negotiations between the teachers and their principals are not unusual; in fact, these relationships appear to be confirmed as representative of teacher-principal power relations by other researchers (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999; Short & Johnson, 1994).

The teachers in Phase I had what they viewed as a positive relationship with their principal. These teachers felt valued by their principal. Jill stated, "I do feel a lot of respect from him towards everyone in the building" (2003, Int. 4, 95-96). Regular and open communication between the principal and teachers set the stage for a collaborative school environment (Short & Rinehart, 1993). In such an environment, teachers "have the power to identify problems, institute change efforts, and, ultimately, be responsible for organizational outcomes" (Short & Rinehart, 1993, p. 596). The teachers in Phase I fulfilled the two first outcomes of such an environment; an example is the Kindergarten teachers' recognition of a problem with a proposed schedule and successful efforts to change the schedule. However, it is unclear if the teachers in Phase I actually held responsibility for school outcomes. It appears that both the principal and the teachers from Phase I expected the principal to retain the ultimate control and power in their

school. Thus the collaborative climate was inconsistent and, although the teachers in Phase I were able to exercise power, they also experienced diminished power due to their own and the principal's decisions.

For example, the teachers in Phase I purposefully gave their principal power on some issues, such as flexible work hours. Short and Johnson (1994) found that "teachers who perceive themselves as participating in the school decision making process give the principals power because of the teachers' personal belief in [the] good will of the principal" (p. 16). Additionally, the principal of the teachers in Phase I exerted "Coercive Power – the leader's control over punishment" (Short & Johnson, 1994, p. 9), when he gave Maureen lower marks on her evaluation due to her exercise of power. Although these instances may be viewed as negative for the teachers, they seem indicative of negotiations. If we view them as such – negotiations of power – then we are less likely to view one group as consistently more powerful than another and more likely to view both parties as having power, though experiencing fluctuations in power. To do so would be a marked change in perspective for the field of education and areas of research interested in teacher-principal power relations.

In this study, the teachers in Phase I entered into the most negotiations for power with their principal. The relationship between these teachers and their principal, though inconsistent, would certainly be viewed as the most positive and productive in this study. On the other end of the spectrum is Leslie and her non-relationship with her principal. The refusal of Leslie's principal to even communicate with her teachers set up an intimidating atmosphere. In such a situation, where "administrators have created a

workplace where teachers are not valued, teachers find staying in their rooms as safe…These teachers resist covertly the control of this principal…" (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999, pp. 15-16). Although Leslie did exercise covert power in her classroom, she did not do so in response to her principal. In fact, Leslie's actions differ from Acker-Hocevar and Touchton's (1999) findings in that, rather than isolating herself when negotiations with her principal failed, she actively sought to negotiate power with another administrator, her assistant principal. Leslie's actions speak clearly to teachers' persistence in exercising power – advocating – for their students and themselves.

Negotiating power does not only occur between teachers and principals. Teachers enter into power relations with parents (Todd & Higgins, 1998), with other teachers (Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 1999; Johnson, 2003), with other administrators (Hartzell, 2003), and even with students (O'Hair & Blase, 1992; Winograd, 2002). However, in this study, the teachers most frequently negotiated power with their principals. I do not find this unusual. Principals are often viewed as the most powerful individual in primary schools; it makes sense that the teachers' bids to influence school outcomes, to garner power, or to make change would focus on the principal.

The inconsistent messages from and actions by the teachers in negotiations with their principals are the third puzzle piece which forms the picture of Ambivalence toward Power. For example, although the Phase I teachers recognized and even confronted their principal with his inconsistent messages and actions concerning teacher power, they also displayed such inconsistencies. These teachers "chose their battles," negotiating power with their principal only concerning issues of primary importance and resorting to covert

power to address other issues or in response to the principal's decisions. Such actions worked to undermine the collaborative school environment that the teachers seemed to desire and illustrate the teachers' ambivalence toward power.

The teachers in Phase II did not experience collaborative school environments; on the contrary, these teachers most often experienced very little direct communication at all with their principals. It is unclear whether the goal of the principals who refused communication with the Phase II teachers was to render the teachers powerless, but that was what the teachers believed. It appeared that the principals of these teachers entered into negotiations only to garner power from the teachers. An example of this is when the principals requested that the teachers attend rallies in support of a local bond issue. Such requests assume that teachers hold influence – power – and confused the teachers. I believe that these inconsistent messages contributed to the teachers' ambivalence toward power. It is clear that the teachers in Phase II sought to exert influence and power in their schools, but due to the sometimes extreme climates created by their principals, the teachers' exercises of power were inconsistent. The teachers felt that the principals wanted them to be powerless and they exhibited denial and resistance when the principals tried to negotiate power with them. The ambivalence of the teachers in Phase II is also displayed through their inconsistent messages about and actions of power.

Reluctance to Access Power

Though all of the teachers in both phases of this study exercised power for their students, themselves, and other teachers, they also exhibited reluctance to access power.

Couchenour and Dimino (1999) believe that "perhaps the term 'power' has a negative connotation among educators" (p. 194). Although published decades earlier, Rotigel (1972) supports this assertion when he writes, "Teachers have been reluctant to use their power to exert control over the educational process because of the connotations of the words 'power' and 'control' themselves. We seem to attribute evil intent to those with power, and we look with suspicion upon anyone who would seek to control public education" (p. 76). Confirming this idea, in a study of primary headteachers who held influence, and thus power, over other teachers, Hall (1994) found that all of the headteachers demonstrated "some ambivalence about power issues" (p. 9). Of this, Hall writes, "They [the headteachers] enjoy the power to make things happen but fear the potential for abusing power" (p. 9). Although the teachers in this study did not communicate such fears, they did hold contradictory perceptions of power. Such perceptions led the teachers to both exercise and resist power. Related to this resistance, a majority of the teachers were reluctant to access the power offered by "Unions," the first category of this sub-theme, and all of the teachers were reluctant to access power without the promise of "Personal Benefit," the second category of this sub-theme. Such reluctance is indicative of the teachers' ambivalence toward power.

Unions

Although Urban (1982) writes that teachers have utilized unions as a collective advocacy outlet since the late nineteenth century, most of the teachers in this study did not garner power from or exercise power through unions. Four of the teachers belonged

to a union, but only one, Carol, actively participated in her union. The other teachers had little knowledge about the history of teacher unions; moreover, they exhibited confusion about the role of unions, ambivalence toward unions, and general feelings of frustration about the actions and accomplishments of unions.

Phase I Teachers

"The main reason I joined [a union] originally when I started teaching was for liability insurance," Carol stated (2003, Int. 5, 9). This sentiment was echoed by all the teachers in this study who belonged to a union. For example, Jill stated, "I joined TSTA mostly for protection" (2003, Int. 5, 108). In recent years, teacher unions have utilized their "member benefits," such as liability insurance and discounts on everything from car insurance to magazine subscriptions, to attract new members. For the majority of teachers in this study, these member benefits overshadowed any advocacy measures on the part of the unions; in fact, most of the women seemed unaware that unions do advocate for teachers, as Jill questioned, "Is there a passionate group that wants to go and stand on the capital for all of our social security problems? Is there a group out there that wants to do that?" (2003, Int. 2, 166-168). The teachers' statements seem remarkable and beg the question of why are unions marketing their "benefits" to teachers rather than marketing their purpose, which is to represent teachers, their needs and interests? Several related factors may be responsible for this.

The present state of teacher unions and of teachers' perceptions of teacher unions seems to be tied to the recent history of teacher unions in which the militant tactics

utilized by unions in the 1960s and 1970s produced public backlash against teachers and their unions (Donley, 1976). Such tactics were distasteful for many teachers because they contradicted the image of teacher as public servant and professional. In fact, the concept of unions appears to conflict with the very idea of teaching as a profession since other professions, such as the medical profession, do not have unions at all; actually, unions have traditionally been tied to the working class (Carlson, 1987). Further, the militant tactics utilized by teacher unions oppose the discourse of professionalism for teachers which indicates that "exhibiting power or disagreeing is unprofessional" (Cannella, 1997, p. 145). Specific to this study and the participants, such militant tactics also contradict the image of the Southern woman, who is proper and rational. Any or all of these factors may be responsible for teacher unions' move to market themselves in a certain way to teachers; however, the effects of such marketing are clear in this study as first indicated by the teachers' reasons for joining unions and their lack of knowledge of unions and as further indicated by their perceptions of unions.

Of the three women in Phase I who belonged to unions, only one, Carol, held a positive view of her union's activities and her role in that union. She stated, "I feel like I'm an important member of my union. I pay my dues, I read the newsletters, I email, I know what's going on, and I see all the advances that we've made: the cap on classes, 3% [salary] increase here and there, and basically every year. I mean, they've made advances" (2003, Int. 1, 124-126). Carol's perception of her union and level of participation in her union differed almost completely from the teachers in both Phase I and II. Both Carol and Maureen believed that Carol's positive perception of her union

related to her age and experience. For example, Maureen described the time when she and Carol entered the workforce in the 1970s as a "political era" and stated, "I think that doesn't apply as much to younger people because there's not that kind of militancy required just in your daily life of womanhood" (2003, Int. 2, 34-35). Carol and Maureen's greater acceptance of terms such as politics, activism, and militancy played out in their willingness to access and utilize multiple forms of power. For Carol, this meant accessing power through her union; however, Maureen had chosen not to join a union.

Maureen indicated that she did not belong to a union she did not feel that Texas teacher unions were, in her words, "real" (2003, Int. 5). She stated, "I have a teacher friend in California and their union is real. When they a problem, they don't come to work. They have a …" As Maureen struggled for the correct terminology, I offered, "A grievance process?" Maureen replied, "Right, and it's legal and binding" (2003, Int.5, 63-68). In Maureen's case, the historical and current context of teacher unions in Texas influenced Maureen's decision to not access and utilize this source of teacher power.

Concerning the other Phase I teachers, both Jill and Bev were members of unions; however, both teachers exhibited similar apathy concerning their union membership. Illustrative of this is a comment by Jill concerning information she received about another local union:

> I don't want to admit this on tape but basically I was too lazy to even call and not even be a member of TSTA and change to TFT after [another teacher] told me

> that it was only like eighty-five dollars and I'm paying like three hundred or something. I have no idea (2003, Int. 5, 110-113).

Bev exhibited similar apathy when asked why she chose the union to which she belonged: "I think because [another teacher] was a rep. I mean seriously, she's next door and I was like, 'Okay, that'll be easy'" (2003, Int. 5, 150-152). Beyond this, neither Bev nor Jill had much knowledge about their unions; they did not read union newsletters or attend union meetings and they had never utilized their union for any power or advocacy measures. Such apathy may directly relate to these teachers' lack of experience with the need for unions, as indicated by Maureen and Carol earlier, or to the historical and situational context of teacher unions in Texas and the perception of them as "not real." Whatever the case, being a part of a teacher union was for Jill and Bev a perfunctory requirement; much like obtaining car insurance, they paid their union dues, felt confident in their liability insurance coverage, and went about their daily business.

Although only Carol was currently active in her union, all the teachers in Phase I believed that teacher unions have power potential. The idea of union consolidation and increased power emerged through the teachers' discussions. For example, Maureen felt that currently the unions' advocacy measures were less effective than they could be because "there are so many different teacher organizations and they don't have a real meaning to the legislators. So their actions are, I think, being splintered" (2003, Int. 5, 47-48). Maureen's statement suggests that union consolidation would create more power, an idea with which the other teachers agreed. However, Bev sought a merger for reasons beyond activism. She stated, "Ideally, I would like to see consolidation because I

wonder what it would be like if we had just one teacher union…I would like to see that unification state when there is something we stand for, we can all stand together" (2003, Int. 6, 72-74).

The idea of union consolidation is not a new one; the NEA and the AFT have discussed the idea since 1968 (Donley, 1976). Barriers, such as differing philosophies, have prevented such a national consolidation, but local unions have been merging since this date. Actually, although the women in Phase I were unaware of this occurrence, the local chapters of the NEA and the AFT in a large neighboring school district had merged four years previous to this study and, thus, had been able to increase member size and for the first time ever be included in the consultation process with the school board for teacher benefits ("We all care about the kids," 2000). About the merger, the co-president of the union said, "We just put the personalities and the history aside and got down to what's important: empowering educators" ("We all care about the kids," 2000, p. 17). This philosophy and focus seemed to be exactly what the teachers hoped for themselves, as they ultimately decided that unions were their best prospect for teacher advocacy. Carol stated,

> I think historically [unions have] proven to be the best vehicle for getting things done for educators. Even if you've got an angry mob of teachers in the building together trying to push forward their agenda, unless you have some people that are there to connect between them and the lawmakers, I don't think it's going to be very helpful. So, I think through the years we've found out that the unions are

> necessary. Now it's just trying to chisel away and figure out what they can do to help us the most. And we should combine unions (2003, Int. 6, 108-114).

It is interesting to recognize that the teachers in Phase I clearly believed that unions held great power potential for teachers, but that they were reluctant to take part in generating such power. Similar findings emerged in Phase II.

Phase II Teachers

Leslie joined a union her first year of teaching because she witnessed union advocacy for another teacher. She described: "My first year here, I saw it work" (2004, Int. 4, 108). Leslie detailed how when a fellow teacher's job was in question, "[The president of the local union] came and had a meeting. By the time she left, they [the administration] had to let her keep her job" (123-124). This was powerful motivation for Leslie to join the union. Later, when her own teaching position was in jeopardy, Leslie utilized her union.

This occurred in her second year of teaching, when Leslie was led to believe that her position as a Kindergarten teacher was stable, even though she was an uncertified teacher:

> I had my job and everything all set up… They had called me all summer because I had had a baby, and they wanted to know the exact date I was coming back. Did I have my substitute lesson plan? Did I have my classroom set up? The counselor called me. The coordinator called me. The principal called me (2004, Int. 4, 204, 206-208).

However, Leslie went on, “They told me two weeks before school was supposed to start… They called me, my principal called me, and told me they wouldn’t be able to re-hire me because I wasn’t certified” (2004, Int. 4, 202-206). Leslie contacted her union president, who “called and within 30 minutes, she knew the whole thing…She couldn’t help get me with [the director who refused to rehire Leslie] but she sure did find out that information real quick, so it was nice for me to know it wasn’t just that my principal didn’t want me” (2004, Int. 4, 211-215). Leslie’s experience led her to continue to be a member of her union, though she did not participate in other union activities, including advocacy measures such as attending local meetings or opposing a proposed bond issue. Like Bev and Jill from Phase I, Leslie viewed unions as insurance, protection and power that you pay for and access when necessary. For these teachers, there was no cognizance of contributing to, cultivating, or increasing this source of power. These teachers did not see unions as a desirable organization to be a member of, like the Junior League or church groups; unions were a necessary evil. However, even as such, Leslie’s actions indicate that the teachers would deliberately access this power when necessary, such as when their jobs were at stake.

The other teachers in Phase II, Sara and Diane, had little knowledge of their local or national unions before entering the focus group. In fact, Sara was unsure whether or not she belonged to a union and, concerning union dues, stated, “That may be coming out of my paycheck and I just don’t know” (2004, Int. 4, 191). Sara’s comment is again indicative of the apathy exhibited by Jill, Bev, and Leslie. Her statement indicates that

like medical insurance, her union dues may be deducted from her paycheck and that would be acceptable. To ask for more involvement on her part appears questionable.

Diane did not belong to a union. Though she considered joining a union for liability purposes, for Diane, there was "just kind of a negative connotation" (2004, Int. 2, 254) associated with unions. She stated, "…That is not my personality…I am very passionate about my beliefs, but I don't really get involved in any kind of groups. I have some very definite political ideals and ways that I think people should live and what have you, but no, I can't say that I really get in groups" (2004, Int. 2, 185-188). Out of all the teachers in Phase II, Diane seemed most aware that unions may involve activities with which she was not comfortable. She stated that she was "very active in our church and I consider that really my role to play in becoming involved in the community and becoming involved with other people" (2004, Int. 2, 92-194). Diane's statements indicate that her positionality, and the social norms and values of the culture surrounding her, directly affected her perception, access, and use of power through unions. For Diane, accessing power through her church was acceptable and desirable, while accessing power through unions was not.

Interestingly, even the teachers in Phase II, whose lack of knowledge of unions led to a general confusion about the unions' local and national names and how their philosophies differed, realized the possible power of unions, as well as the possible impact of union consolidation. This is illustrated by Leslie:

> Well, there's the CFT and the AFT and I think somehow they work together. There is the Louisiana Federation of Teachers. They are not one entity. They

> want to join them together maybe. I heard someone say that if that happened, teachers would be so strong that teachers would get just about anything they wanted, so they're like right here, but I don't know what the deal is (2004, Int. 4, 154-158).

She later reiterated, "If they [unions] merged, it would be real strong. We would probably get big raises" (2004, Int. 8, 325). It is ironic that the teachers would feel this way and yet would resist actively participating in a teacher union to make this happen. Such resistance illustrates just how strong cultural influences can be; yet, I cannot help but wonder, if the teachers can be pushed to access power through unions in dire circumstances, such as the loss of a job, will the current external forces in elementary schools push more teachers to become active in their unions?

Discussion

The reluctance to actively participate in teacher unions exhibited by most of the teachers in this study is not unusual. Related to the fact that many of the teachers viewed activism and unions as somewhat "extreme" is the idea that teachers are typically conservative (Donley, 1977; Lightfoot, 1983; Lortie, 1975). Relating such conservatism to power and advocacy, Lightfoot (1983) writes, "The young people who choose teaching tend to be favorably disposed toward the status quo. For the most part, they identify with traditional views and rarely confront opposing perspectives that might challenge the existing system" (p. 244). The teachers in this study appeared to fulfill this in their reluctance to participate or access power through unions.

Further, the women identified conservatism associated with teachers and acknowledged conservatism in themselves. Speaking about teachers in general, Maureen stated, "Most teachers are…concerned about their feelings getting hurt, or their feelings are important to them and so they're really concerned about how they affect other people's feelings. So, then as a group, teachers are very polite and so they don't want to offend anybody" (2003, Int. 4, 183-187). Maureen felt that these characteristics kept teachers from organizing, such as joining a union, and participating in activist type activities.

Speaking about themselves specifically, several of the teachers identified conservative traits. For example, Bev stated, "That's my personality…to be a rule follower" (2003, Int. 3, 320). Other teachers in the group were also "rule followers", such as Carol, who although she disagreed with a teacher requirement decided upon by her principal, adhered to the requirement because, "It's the rule" (2003, Int. 1, 311). In this study, such conservatism is related to the teachers' positionality and the discourse of professionalism which situated the women as good teachers, good mothers, good wives, good daughters, (Cannella, 1997) and Southern ladies. Due to the negative perceptions of unions and union activities, the teachers' limited their participation, their roles, in unions; however, most of the teachers did not sever their connection to unions. Further, one teacher, Carol, actively participated in her union and another teacher, Leslie, accessed power through her union in dire circumstances. Such findings indicate that the teachers deliberately worked within contextual parameters and with acceptable protocol to remain connected to and access power through unions when necessary.

The literature posits how such conservatism and the negative perception of activist organizations like unions can lead teachers to have a tainted view of power and skewed perceptions of their roles in the educational system, as well as society. For example, the widespread and historical view of teaching as a sacrificial occupation inhibits teacher acquisition and use of power. Freedman (1987) writes,

> To call attention to their own needs as workers would be to break the only legitimate claim that teachers have to public support – the belief that teachers teach best when they sacrifice most – that the 'dedicated' teacher is modeled after the ideal wife/mother, who sacrifices her own interests to support the interests of those bound to her by duty and love. She does this best with a minimum of public attention and acclaim. Indeed the better the teacher, the more she is able to keep her own concerns, and those dependent upon her, 'private' (p. 43).

Beyond the sacrificial image of teachers described here, Freedman also points to two other specific factors that relate to teachers' reluctance to access power through unions. First, the idea that there is an inherent clash between teacher and student interests often stymies teachers' pursuit of power or change (Donley, 1976). Cooper and Liotta (2001) write that "although teachers in many communities are union members, they still see themselves and their work as primarily professional – helping children learn and grow" (p. 109). Though as early as 1904, union leaders have refuted such a conflict (Donley, 1976), it remains a view held by both society in general and teachers specifically. Second, Freedman's emphasis upon the "private" nature of teaching relates to the isolation of teachers so well documented (Acker, 1995, 1987; Hargreaves, 1994; Lortie,

1975; Mac An Ghaill, 1992; Sachs & Smith, 1988; Waller, 1932) and previously discussed in this chapter. Related to unions, Cooper and Liotta (2001) write that "most teachers work in semi-isolated classrooms and think little about the bigger picture," such as "a big national union" (p. 109). Although such isolation was cited by the teachers in this study and is presented in the literature as a hindrance to teacher power (Freedman, Jackson, & Boles, 1983), the women in this study commented a great deal on the possibility of greater teacher power through a consolidated union. Whether the teachers would access such power remains unclear.

Though the reluctance of most of these teachers to access power through unions, the fourth puzzle piece, may seem to conflict with the teachers use of power previously documented, this is simply another illustration of the teachers' inconsistent and uneasy relationship with power. The teachers' ambivalence toward the power available through unions was indicated by several factors. First, the teachers had little knowledge of unions and though they desired more information, they did not seek out such information. Second, the teachers appeared to believe that the unions held power for teachers, but most did not actively participate in their unions or access this power. Third, the teachers believed that union consolidation would facilitate the greatest power for teachers, but none of the teachers pursued such consolidation, or even information about it. Inconsistencies in the teachers' words and actions concerning unions point to their ambivalence toward power.

Personal Benefit

That the teachers would desire personal benefit from exercising power or taking advocacy actions is not remarkable; however, the fact that the teachers would resist power if they did not perceive personal benefits from such power is significant. Researchers rarely ask what is important to teachers about their work (Nias, 1989); yet, even without this information, researchers continue draw conclusions about teachers' actions or inactions. Understanding what is important to teachers and what drives them to action may well serve teacher education agencies, education reform initiatives, and, of course, teachers themselves.

Phase I Teachers

The teachers in Phase I realized early on that personal benefit most drove them to access power and become advocates for themselves and other teachers. They related this drive to "passion" and felt that such passion was a key component for teachers becoming advocates. An exchange between Carol and Maureen illustrates this:

> Carol: "I'm out of my comfort zone a little bit with the activism, but I'm starting small because I'm so egocentric that I can see how quickly this issue will affect me."
>
> Maureen: "But, see, what you have is passion and if you don't have the passion, you can't really turn anybody and so you have to take something you're interested in" (2003, Int. 1, 205-211).

The issue that Carol was so passionate about was social security and, although clearly she felt strongly enough about the issue to label herself an activist, she both demeaned and excused her actions by calling herself "egocentric." However, the negative connotations that the teachers applied to activism, and that Carol herself applied, did not stop Carol from advocating for herself and others. Even when she felt "kind of guilty" (2003, Int. 1, 195) for communicating information about this issue to other teachers through email, she continued to do so because of the personal benefit she attached to the issue. Carol found her actions distasteful because they were outside the acceptable protocol that she so well understood and successfully operated within. However, with her experience and leadership in exerting power, Carol could step outside the norm protocol, take new steps to garner power, and still be accepted and successful within her school culture, as was seen by the teachers' positive responses to Carol's email and activist actions concerning social security. Carol's actions paved the way for other individual teachers to act on their passion; however, the teachers in Phase I questioned the relationship between teachers' collective advocacy and personal benefit.

Maureen believed that the "the diversity of staff people" contributed to a lack of common interests and therefore a lack of collective action (2003, Int. 6, 151). However, the teachers felt that increased communication among teachers would produce common concerns and interests that would in turn create increased advocacy. For example, Maureen discussed the effects of the communication the teachers received through the focus group meetings: "Just for this week, now we have that you're [Jill] reading your magazine [union newsletter] and [Carol's] brought us copies of this [social security

email] and just by talking to people, it empowers you. And teachers don't have that opportunity very often" (2003, Int. 2, 170-173). Although these teachers clearly had an invisible infrastructure in place which supported their use of power, such as the covert power previously discussed in this chapter, it became clear that they desired a more visible support system.

The women envisioned such a system as teachers communing and sharing ideas, concerns, and stories. Even though the teachers were successful in exerting power within their school context based upon their knowledge of and experience with the protocol and steps to take to garner power, they continued to feel constrained by issues such as lack of time to meet and communicate with other teachers. Cannella (1997) relates this to the discourse of professionalism and the intensification of teachers' work. She writes, "We now find teachers spending their days writing lesson plans, creating learning centers and units, grading stacks of papers, covering skills, and evaluating students. When labor is so intensified, identity that is self-directed, sociable, or relaxed is lost;" however, "this intensification is accepted as the content of education, as required in the construction of professional behavior" (Cannella, 1997, p. 147). Therefore, to be positioned as successful, "professional" teachers, these women had to work within the current culture, a context in which intensification and isolation precluded time and communication.

Phase II Teachers

Though the teachers in Phase II did not directly identify the passion or personal benefit associated with advocacy that the teachers in Phase I did, their comments clearly

indicated similar thinking. The women in Phase II first and foremost valued security in their jobs; such value was related to both their past experiences and their status as new teachers in their schools. For example, because Leslie had both witnessed teachers losing their jobs due to questionable circumstances and experienced job instability herself, she was reluctant to access or utilize power. While she felt that after certification and some experience as teachers that she and the other women in Phase II "will be much more advocates for what we need" (2004, Int. 4, 324), she stated, "Right now, until we are certified…I stay out of it as much as possible" (2004, Int. 4, 328-332). Teachers who seek such security are less likely to take actions which may endanger their job status (Terrien, 1955; Webb & Ashton, 1987). The teachers in Phase II felt so strongly about such security that even when asked to utilize their power and advocate for other teachers, they resisted.

On two occasions during this study, the teachers in Phase II received such requests. The first situation concerned teachers writing letters to the school board in response to a discrepancy in salary raise between central office personnel and teachers. Diane did not participate in the letter writing because she said, "It doesn't affect me yet" (2004, Int. 5, 148). The second situation concerned a new continuing education requirement that affected experienced teachers. Recently graduated teachers, like the teachers in Phase II, were not affected and so when Sara was asked to contact a school representative in support of the experienced teachers, she stated, "I have to be honest…I probably would not contact him because it doesn't affect me" (2004, Int. 8, 43-44). The teachers' reluctance to exert power for other teachers was affected by their positionality

as new teachers who wanted to see seen as good teachers. These teachers believed that to be seen as a good teacher would increase their security. What entailed "good" to them relates to the discourse of professionalism which clearly defines acceptable and successful roles for teachers. These roles include, among other things, the ability to take and implement technical, structured curriculum; controlling students; and denying power, agreeing with authority, and remaining apolitical (Cannella, 1997). The teachers in Phase II worked hard to fulfill these roles; however, they would resist even these roles when they felt their security was threatened. For example, the teachers also refused to advocate when requested by administrators to do so.

To elaborate, the principals of both Sara and Diane requested that they attend rallies in support of a proposed bond issue. Neither teacher attended the rallies. Such resistance would appear to fly in the face of the teachers' desired security, but it seems that the teachers felt that no show of power or advocacy was the safest choice for them. To maintain their positionality as good teachers, these women ignored their principals' requests in order to deny a show of power. However, when personal benefit was involved, even these teachers would advocate. For instance, as previously described, Leslie utilized her union to advocate for herself when her teaching position was not renewed (2004, Int. 4).

Discussion

Though the teachers in the two phases of this study focused on different personal benefits from their use of power, they all were reluctant to access power without

perceived personal benefit. That the more experienced teachers of Phase I were able to look beyond basic job security to issues that related more personally to them, while the less experienced teachers of Phase II first and foremost desired job security is not surprising.

In fact, Terrien (1955) found the "security principle" to be "one of the more dominant influences" among teachers (p. 17). Security in teaching is perceived to come from the personal benefits of a stable, albeit low, income and an assured job position. That a desire for such security can lead to teachers' reluctance to access power is confirmed by the findings of other researchers. Terrien (1955) writes, "A corollary of the emphasis on security is a desire to avoid those actions which threaten security, particularly actions which tend to 'buck the system' and pit the interests of the individual against those of the employer." (p. 17). Webb and Ashton (1987) report similar findings and write, "In their eagerness to find security in an uncertain profession, many teachers took care not to rock the boat or offend colleagues, parents, or supervisors. Minds so set on survival were unlikely to entertain suggestions for change or instigate reforms" (p. 30). Taking into consideration the mostly negative relationships between the teachers in Phase II and their principals, it is easy to see why they would fear "rocking the boat" in their schools. For them, the personal benefits of job security far outweighed accessing power, even when asked to do so by their principals.

It appeared that the teachers in Phase I had moved beyond worrying about job security; however, feeling secure in their jobs did not necessarily affect their reluctance to access certain types of power. Most of these teachers seemed reluctant to access power

that might be perceived as "activist" actions. This is seen through Carol's dialogue with Maureen, quoted previously, in which Carol describes what she perceives to be activist actions as "egocentric." However, it is important to note that when personal benefit was perceived, these teachers would engage in even activist-type activities. Such negative perceptions of activism certainly influenced the Phase II teachers, as well, who described activists as "a little more on the extreme" (Diane, 2004, Int. 4, 40). Feeling that "no one wants to be seen as extremist" (Sara, 2004, Int. 4, 62), presumably including themselves, it is clear that these teachers also would exhibit reluctance to access power they perceived as activism.

The teachers' reluctance to access power without personal benefit is the fifth and final puzzle piece related to the theme of Ambivalence toward Power. This category is characterized by the coexistence of the teachers' desire for personal gain and their aversion to certain forms of power, most often those perceived as activism. The coexistence of these feelings produced confusion and also inconsistency in the teachers. Certainly, the teachers wanted to address professional and personal needs related to their job. They knew they had access to power and were aware that they utilized power for themselves and their students in other situations. Their negative perceptions of utilizing power for their own benefit hindered some of these actions, but when the personal need was strong enough or benefit great enough, almost all of the teachers would step outside of their comfort zone and exercise power.

Chapter Summary: Addressing the Whole Picture

In this chapter, I presented the overarching theme of this dissertation, "Ambivalence toward Power," as well as three sub-themes and supporting data. I stated previously that each category presented, of which there are five, was a puzzle piece which individually did not verify the teachers' ambivalence toward power, but that collectively created a strong image of such ambivalence.

The first sub-theme, "Power and Resistance," is supported by two categories of data, "Becoming Teachers" and "Covert Power." This sub-theme illustrates the teachers' acceptance and exercise of power; however, the categories demonstrate different forms of power utilized by the teachers. In their stories of becoming teachers, the women conveyed a positive perception of power and of using that power to resist external influences in order to reach a goal that facilitated the professional and personal situations they desired. In the category of "Covert Power," the women again used power to resist external forces. In this case, however, the teachers isolated themselves from non-teacher adults to utilize power, a strategy learned from more experienced teachers. The teachers exhibited conflicting feelings about covert power and utilized it inconsistently.

The second sub-theme, "Negotiating Power," is supported by one category, "Power and Principals." This sub-theme illustrates the teachers' desire to exert, garner, and/or combine power with individuals who they perceive to have more power than themselves; the category demonstrates the teachers' negotiations with the principals to facilitate such power. The power negotiations of the teachers are characterized by

inconsistent messages about and use of power from other individuals to the teachers, as well as from the teachers to other individuals.

The third sub-theme, "Reluctance to Access Power," is supported by two categories, "Unions" and "Personal Benefit." This sub-theme illustrates negative perceptions of and resistance to certain sources or forms of power. The first category demonstrates the teachers' reluctance to access the power available from unions. All of the teachers believe that unions offer not only power to teachers, but are potentially the source of the greatest power for teachers; however, the majority of teachers in the study do not actively participate in unions, nor do they access power through unions. The second category demonstrates the teachers' reluctance to access power without personal benefit. Although this category encompasses the least amount of data, it is quite significant. As stated previously, little is known about what is important to teachers in their work. I believe this category has the least amount of data because teachers are rarely asked what personal and professional benefits motivate them and so they rarely think on or discuss these ideas. It is clear, however, that with personal benefit, teachers will access power, while without personal benefit, they may not do so.

The puzzle is complete. It is composed of five pieces: (1) the teachers' positive perceptions of and use of power and resistance; (2) the teachers' uneasy use of covert power and resistance; (3) the inconsistent messages from and actions by the teachers when negotiating power; (4) the teachers' negative perceptions of and reluctance to access a primary power source for teachers, unions; and (5) the teachers' negative perceptions of accessing power for themselves and their reluctance to access such power

without personal benefit. The picture that is created is one of ambivalence toward power. Such ambivalence consistently affected the teachers' advocacy on behalf of themselves and other teachers, as demonstrated through the sub-themes and categories. This picture of ambivalence, though clear, still begs the question of, why? What causes teachers to feel so uneasy about power and to utilize it so inconsistently? In the following section, I explore in detail the two related factors which I believe affected the teachers' ambivalence toward power.

Making Sense of Ambivalence toward Power

The two factors which I believe affected the teachers' perceptions of, inconsistent use of, and ambivalence toward power are: (1) the culture in which the participants were located and (2) the discourse of professionalism. Although I list these as distinct factors, they are related. For example, both factors create acceptable roles and behavior for women teachers, the participant population for this study. Additionally, it appears that the similarities between the factors result in a reinforcement of the norms, expectations, and values associated with both factors.

The Affects of Culture and Positionality

In this study, I utilize the term culture to refer to the historical events, social norms, and values that pervaded both the communities and also the institutions, or schools, in which the participants were located. Researchers such as Acker (1990) and A. Hargreaves (1994) have found that both the community and the institutional culture affect

teachers' perceptions and behaviors; findings in my study indicate that these cultural influences affected the teachers' views on and use of power.

Taking place in close geographical regions, specifically Louisiana and Texas, it appeared that the community cultures in which the participants were located had overwhelmingly similar social norms and values and I, therefore, refer subsequently to a singular culture in this study, rather than cultures. Further, that the teachers in this study were all white, middle class, Southern females also produced similarities in the positionality of the participants within this culture. In this study, I utilize the term positionality to refer to the roles the participants assumed, such as teacher, and the expectations and behaviors associated with those roles. I believe that both the culture and positionality of the teachers affected their perception and use of power by shaping gender expectations and behavior norms. Each of these plays out in the data and findings of this study.

Culture and Positionality: Gender Expectations

In this study, the teachers appeared to be influenced by gender expectations of the culture in which they were located and their positionality in the culture. For example, in the Southern culture in which this study took place – and in other contexts, as well – it appeared that elementary teaching was accepted as "women's work" (Acker, 1995; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Hargreaves, A., 1994). This idea is reinforced by the belief that women are better elementary teachers because they are more caring and motherly than men and is related to the belief that women teachers can be paid less

because their husbands are the primary providers. Such beliefs stem from a history of elementary teaching being occupied mainly by women and also by the norms and values of the culture. Though it was unclear whether the teachers in this study believed that women were better elementary teachers than men, all of the married women in this study, six out of seven, were the secondary income for their family, a fact they openly discussed and accepted.

These gendered views and norms affected the teacher's use of power. For example, because a majority of the women accepted their position as secondary family income, they did not exert power to change the salaries of teachers; however, a majority of the women in this study also viewed their salaries as too low. Such tensions in the women's knowledge created inconsistencies in their use of power as they carefully chose when and where to exert power. For instance, none of the women exerted power to influence teacher salaries, but one teacher, Carol, exerted power to influence social security legislation related to teachers, a topic closely tied to teacher salaries and one Carol viewed as a personal benefit.

Further, the women in this study were positioned as good teachers, good mothers, good wives, good daughters, and Southern women. Each of these roles carried specific, and sometimes related, expectations for the women. Many of the women in this study used power to balance these roles; however, the fact that they sought to fulfill each of these roles indicates the influence of cultural norms and values. For example, the women in this study discussed, and I identified, their decision to become teachers as an example of power and resistance; however, this decision is also an example of the influence on

decisions of traditional gender roles accepted within the context in which the teachers were located. Specifically, the benefits of becoming a teacher discussed by the women in this study such as having the same daily schedule as their children illustrates the women's use of power to align personal and professional goals, but also their acceptance of the traditional role of women as the primary caregivers for children.

Such gender role expectations also influenced the teachers' use of power. For example, while the women exerted power to become teachers, they exhibited resistance to some forms of power available and specific to teachers, such as unions. This resistance was tied to the fact that unions were not viewed as an acceptable source of power for women in the South, whereas the women garnered and exerted power through other, more acceptable, sources such as the Junior League and their churches. Thus, gender expectations also created inconsistencies in the teachers' perceptions and use of power.

Culture and Positionality: Behavior Norms

Although it is common for individuals to follow certain behavior norms to operate successfully within a culture or context, it is the fact that within this study such behavior norms affected how, when, where and why the teachers accessed or resisted power that is significant. The behavior norms the teachers in this study followed were closely tied to the previously discussed gender roles and expectations. Zimmerman, McQueen, and Guy (2003) found that white Southern believe that their lives and behaviors were most shaped by their gender roles and class. In this study, the teachers seemed most influenced by

their roles as good teachers, good mothers, good wives, good daughters, and Southern women and the behavior norms associated with these roles.

An example of this is the way the teachers negotiated power with their principals. The elaborate process which Carol and the other Kindergarten teachers used to exert power to change their schedule relates to behavior norms. As good teachers within their school, these women followed the acceptable protocol and steps to take to garner and exert power. And they were successful. Though many people would find such a lengthy process redundant and demeaning, these teachers knew that in order both to garner and exert power successfully and to maintain their status as good teachers, they must follow certain behavior norms. The teachers appeared to expertly balance the related behavior norms associated with each of their roles.

As good teachers, they had well run classrooms, maintained collegial relationships with administrators and other teachers, and received satisfactory, or better, professional assessments. As good wives, mothers, and daughters, they had well run families by maintaining a schedule which supported both their families' and their personal and professional commitments. As Southern white women, they maintained a proper and rational demeanor in the process of balancing these roles.

Such behavior norms also affected the teachers' use of power as the women worked carefully within and around both self-imposed and externally imposed parameters to access and exercise power. Much of the teachers' behavior appeared to be affected by their view of themselves as professionals and the behavior norms associated with

professionals, an idea intertwined with the second factor related to the teachers' ambivalence toward power, the discourse of professionalism.

The Affects of the Discourse of Professionalism

The teachers in this study discussed and viewed themselves as professionals. Though the teachers used the term professional in the commonly understood sense of the word to elevate their status and the status of their occupation, I believe that the meanings and expectations associated with the discourse of professionalism directly influenced the teachers' perceptions of, inconsistent use of, and ambivalence toward power. In an analysis of the discourse of professionalism, Cannella (1997) writes "that professionalism is a double-edged sword that (1) could lead to a strengthening of position and increased respect, but (2) has more often resulted in increased domination by those in power" (p. 137). I will utilize Cannella's further analysis of the discourse of professionalism to frame my argument that such professionalism influences teachers' ambivalence toward power.

Cannella (1997) believes that the professionalism discourse is based upon "a patriarchal societal structure" (p. 138). I submit that this patriarchal professionalism influenced the teachers' ambivalence toward power by: (1) creating acceptable and expected roles and behaviors for teachers (Cannella, 1997) and (2) conveying inconsistent messages to teachers about their knowledge and power. Further, I believe that the discourse of professionalism is related to and reinforced by the culture and positionality of the teachers in this study.

The Discourse of Professionalism: Roles and Behaviors

First, similar to the culture and positionality in this study, the discourse of professionalism creates acceptable and expected roles and behaviors for teachers. For example, the discourse of professionalism, which "promotes patriarchal perspectives, legitimizing power for particular groups and denying others any form of authority" (Cannella, 1997, p. 144), reinforces the view of teaching as women's work. Such a view positions women teachers "as good mothers, as gendered workers, as agents of the state, and as good daughters (Cannella, 1997, p. 146). Related to the epistemology of the context previously discussed, these roles become accepted as truth and also carry with them certain expectations and acceptable behaviors.

For example, exercising power or opposing administrators or policy is considered unprofessional behavior for "professional" teachers (Cannella, 1997). For the teachers in this study, who considered themselves professionals in the commonly understood sense of the word, this expectation created a contradictory situation – they are told that as professionals they have power, but not to use this power, or to only use it in certain ways. This is clear in the data that illustrates the teachers carefully choosing when and where to garner and exert power. For instance, concerning administrators and power, sometimes the teachers entered into elaborate negotiations with their principals for power, while at other times they exerted covert power, apparently unbeknownst to their principals. Such choices were also tied to the discourse of professionalism which states that teachers should be rational actors (Dillabough, 1999). It is rational to negotiate with an administrator; therefore, the teachers could overtly pursue this power. It is not,

seemingly, rational to leave a class of 22 children, even in the care of other teachers, to make a phone call; therefore the teachers utilized their invisible infrastructure to exert covert power in this situation.

The roles created by the discourse of professionalism not only carry with them certain expectations and acceptable behaviors, but also create an overload of roles for many teachers. Referring to this intensification of teachers' work as "sophisticated methods for regulating teacher resistance," Cannela (1997) writes that such intensification constructs

> an overload that not only eliminated time to read educational materials but even eliminated time to go to the bathroom during the school day…When labor is so intensified, identity that is self-directed, sociable, or relaxed is lost. Teachers have actually become deskilled, accepting technical knowledge and controlled behaviors. The knowledges that would be created through their own lives, imaginations, and creativity are denied. This intensification is accepted as the content of education, as required in the construction of professional behavior (p. 147).

The teachers in this study commented on the collision of their many roles and the negative affect this overload had on the teachers' power and advocacy. For example, Carol described what she perceived to be influences in the lives of many teachers:

> I do think some of the younger teachers, too, they're totally swamped and I was at this point once in my life with babies and carpool and after school activities and you just do not have time to be an advocate for your profession because you're

> trying to tread water and continue your job and do your job at some acceptable level (2003, Int. 2, 126-130).

These many roles often result in teachers feeling overwhelmed and experiencing a lack of time to fulfill such roles (Marston & Courtney, 2002), or to address their own needs. The fact that teachers' roles have become more complicated in recent years is well documented (Acker, 1987; Marston & Courtney, 2002). Acker (1987) details "how primary teachers' responsibilities have expanded beyond classroom interaction to include child welfare, record-keeping, consultation with colleagues, equality initiatives, community contact, computer literacy, inservice courses and children with special needs" (p. 84). Cannella (1997) believes that in response to such intensification teachers still feel that they must "function as professionally and rationally as possible" (p. 147). Such thinking was exhibited by the teachers in this study who "kept their cool" in spite of external controls placed upon them and the intensification of their work through measures such as new curriculum or testing.

The Discourse of Professionalism: Knowledge and Power

Further, the discourse of professionalism does not value the roles of teacher as intellectual and expert. On the contrary, although the professionalism discourse espouses the idea that teachers have specialized expertise and should be the primary curriculum and classroom decision maker, "professional teachers are to use particular scientifically grounded practice that promotes child development, autonomy, problem solving, and that allows for individual knowledge construction…A universal cognitive truth is posited and

reinforced through the construction of professionalism" (Cannella, 1997, pp. 145-146). Such strictly defined roles and such inconsistent messages about their knowledge and power confused and frustrated the teachers in this study. These teachers viewed themselves as capable, knowledgeable, and important – as professionals in the commonly understood sense of the word; however, they all were able to recount stories of encounters in which they were demeaned for their occupation by other adults or given narrow, sometimes even scripted, curriculum to implement to their students. Such inconsistencies further affected the teachers' use of power.

For example, the teachers in Phase II who were in the midst of completing teacher education coursework were knowledgeable of current educational theories, research, and practices, but, during the study, were given a highly structured curriculum by their school district to implement in their classroom. Though such a curriculum contradicted the ideas the teachers were learning in their teacher education program, as good, professional teachers who should have the expertise to implement such as curriculum, they worked diligently to do so. However, to other teachers in the focus groups, they exhibited distress at such actions and confusion as to whether she should exert power to change the curriculum.

Like the culture and positionality of the teachers in this study, the discourse of professionalism was invisible and hard to resist. It is clear from the findings of this study that the participants were cognizant of some factors which affected their perception and use of power. For example, in negotiating power with their principals, the teachers utilized certain protocol and steps to garner and exert power. Such protocol reflected the

school culture and their positionality within that context, though the teachers did not discuss it as such. They only acknowledged that they knew the steps to take to exert power with their principal. They worked within and around these invisible factors, which seemed to interweave and reinforce each other; however, the teachers were certainly not incapacitated by such factors. On the contrary, the teachers deliberately garnered and exerted power in a variety of ways.

Continuum of Power

The teachers in this study accessed, garnered, and exerted power on a continuum. At one end of the continuum, the teachers exhibited positive perceptions of power and, thus, exerted power overtly and with confidence. An example of this is the power the women exerted to become teachers. It is clear in the women's stories that they deliberately and overtly used power to resist external forces from peers, family, and even other teachers, as well negative images and perceptions to become teachers. One reason that the women were able to exert such overt power was because the choice they were making to become teachers was acceptable in the context in which the women were situated; however, it is also apparent that the women consciously exerted power to become teachers because they believed this occupational choice aligned their life roles, values, and goals. Such personal and professional benefits drove the teachers to access and utilize power at all points of the continuum.

To elaborate, at the other end of the continuum, the teachers exhibited negative perceptions of power and a reluctance to access such power. An example of this is the

teachers' reluctance to access the power available through teacher unions. Although all of the women believed that unions held great power potential for teachers, only four teachers in the study were members of a teacher union and only one of these teachers consistently participated in her union's activities. The teachers' reluctance to access this power seemed to by influenced both by the pervasive negative perceptions of unions in their community culture and their positionality as good teachers and Southern women within this context and by the very contradiction between unions and the discourse of professionalism which pervaded and was reinforced by the culture. However, as previously eluded to, the teachers would access and exert power even on this end of the continuum, if necessary.

For example, one teacher in the study, Leslie, who was a member of a teacher union, but did not actively participate in union activities, both tapped and overtly exercised power through her union when she lost her teaching job. Such actions indicate that although the teachers did not want to access power through unions, mainly due to negative perceptions surrounding unions, they did know how to access such power and would access this power if pushed to do so. This is an important finding because it clearly illustrates that the continuum of power was not open at one end and closed at the other end to the teachers; on the contrary, the teachers had entry to and knowledge of how to access power all along the continuum. Clearly, the teachers made choices about which power to access depending on the context, demands, and what they knew worked.

For example, negotiating power may be seen somewhere in the middle of the continuum. The teachers entered into negotiations with their principals first depending

on the context. The teachers in Phase I experienced a collaborative school environment. In such an environment, it was acceptable for the teachers to negotiate power with the principal. Conversely, Leslie, a teacher from Phase II, experienced a closed and intimidating school environment. In this environment, it was clearly not acceptable for teachers to negotiate power with the principal. However, in both situations the teachers identified demands which required power negotiations and utilized what they knew worked in their context.

Such as, some of the teachers in Phase I, based upon their needs and the needs of their students, entered into an elaborate process with their principal to garner and exert power to change a proposed schedule. This process was based upon the knowledge and experience of one teacher, Carol, who had been successful in the past in such negotiations. Carol's deliberate process was successful and showed other teachers how to follow the protocol and steps to take to access and utilize power in that specific school context. Leslie in Phase II also accessed and exerted power through negotiations, but with another administrator, her assistant principal. Leslie found this to be accepted in her school context and, therefore, will probably access this power again. These examples indicate that the teachers, even new the teachers like Leslie, had sophisticated knowledge of their culture, many strategies to draw upon, and a canny knowledge of which strategies to use to access and exert power.

These examples and ideas portray teachers in a unique, rarely seen way: as individuals with keen knowledge and insight into their context and the external forces at work around them, as individuals already holding power and having access to multiple

forms of power, and as individuals who make choices about the power they garner and exert based upon a variety of factors. I do not mean, in any way, to assert that teachers are not subject either to contextual norms, demands, and values or to their positionality within such contexts. On the contrary, I have explicitly discussed in this chapter two factors which I believe influenced the teachers' perceptions of, use of, and ambivalence toward power: the culture and positionality of the teachers within this context and the discourse of professionalism.

However, as stated in Chapter One, it was my hope to add to the literature concerned with teacher stories and hidden aspects of teachers' lives by first and foremost focusing on the abilities of the teachers, their awareness of their professional situations, and the often effective and appropriate responses they use in response to their situations. At this point, it seems clear that the teachers in this study utilized their knowledge and experience to garner and exert power to affect many aspects of their professional situations. Although the teachers often worked within acceptable and expected roles created by factors such as culture and the discourse of professionalism and their acceptance of such factors, the teachers' stories impart new knowledge about teachers' relationships with power and indicate a need for further exploration of the issues discussed in this chapter.

In the following Chapter Five, I present the conclusions of the study, as well as significance and implications for the field of education, limitations of the findings, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

This qualitative study explored teachers' perceptions of advocacy, specifically advocacy for themselves and other teachers. Although it has been well documented that teachers utilize power as advocates for their students (Jewett et al., 1998; Quatroche et al., 2001; Sammons & Lewis, 2000; Schnaiberg, 2001; Tappe & Galer-Unti, 2001), it was unknown, or at least unclear, prior to this study whether teachers accessed and exercised power to advocate for themselves and other teachers. Findings from this study address this gap in the literature and clearly show that the teachers in this study did access and utilize power for themselves and other teachers; however, what is also clear in the findings from this study is that these teachers did not consistently access and exercise power. In fact, though the teachers were able to exert power in a variety of situations and in effective ways, they had an uneasy and inconsistent relationship with power. This ambivalence toward power is the thread that links together the seemingly contradictory stories, perceptions, and actions of the teachers in this study and this ambivalence directly influenced the teachers' advocacy on behalf of themselves and other teachers. In this study, the teachers' perceptions of, use of, and ambivalence toward power appeared to be influenced by two factors: the culture in which the participants were located and the discourse of professionalism.

In this chapter, I first present a review of the findings of this study, which also includes attention to and exploration of how the findings of this study both contradict and build on the literature, as well as explicitly presents what these findings tell us about the teachers in this study. Next in the chapter, I explore the significance and implications of the findings for the field of education. Finally, I present the limitations of the findings and make suggestions for future research.

Review of the Findings

As I analyzed the data from this study, I was both surprised and confused, a not uncommon occurrence among researchers. The categories that emerged in this study from the participants' words and actions seemed at once complementary and conflicting. I recognized readily heard and documented themes and stories, such as those about teacher powerlessness; however, there were also stories I had never heard. I began to realize that the teachers in this study had alerted me to and shared with me yet unheard, undocumented stories of teacher power. Still, the teachers' stories and experiences appeared to shift back and forth between power and powerlessness and sometimes to even fall somewhere in the middle. Each category began to represent a puzzle piece, unique individually and yet obviously connected to each other and a larger picture. As the pieces came together, they revealed that the teachers in this study had an uneasy and inconsistent relationship with power and that this relationship directly affected the teachers' advocacy on behalf of themselves and other teachers. I identified this uneasy, inconsistent relationship with power as the overarching theme of this study,

"Ambivalence toward Power." This overarching theme is specifically illustrated and supported by the three sub-themes of this study: "Power and Resistance," "Negotiating Power," and "Reluctance to Access Power." Taken separately the sub-themes, and categories within them, appear to present conflicting findings; it is the confluence of the sub-themes that clearly reveal the theme of Ambivalence toward Power.

Although it would be easy to dismiss these teachers as indecisive about power or uneasy with power or simply inconsistent in their use of power, I believe that the teachers in this study operated quite successfully to garner and exert power. However, I also believe that factors such as the culture in which the participants were located and the discourse of professionalism, which pervaded and was reinforced by the culture, influenced when, how, and why the teachers would access and use power.

In this study, I use the term culture to refer to the social norms, historical events, and values that permeated both the community and institutions, or schools, in which the teachers were located. Researchers such as Acker (1990) and A. Hargreaves (1994) have found that both the community and the institutional culture affect teachers' perceptions and behaviors; findings in my study indicate that these cultural influences affected the teachers' views on and use of power. Moreover, that the teachers in this study were all white, middle class, Southern females produced similarities in the positionality of the participants within this culture, a further factor influencing the teachers' access and use of power.

Additionally, I use the phrase "discourse of professionalism," which I believe worked within and around the situational context, or culture. Although the term

profession has been used in education in the hopes of elevating the status, pay, and autonomy of teachers, I argue, as other researchers (see Dillabough, 1999; Cannella, 1997), that the discourse, the language which surrounds this concept and which "constructs knowledge and consequently limits alternative forms of knowledge" (Cannella, 1997, p. 13), of professionalism is based upon a patriarchal structure which actually serves to undermine teacher power through creating acceptable and expected roles and behaviors for teachers (Cannella, 1997) and conveying inconsistent messages to teachers about their knowledge and power. The participants in both phases of this study utilized the term profession, and the related term professional, in the commonly understood sense of the word, as "work which needs special training or a particular skill, often one which is respected because it involves a high level of education" (Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2003); they did so, because as previously mentioned, they believed it would increase their status, wages, and autonomy. However, I believe that this discourse of professionalism also influenced the teachers' perceptions of, use of, and ambivalence toward power.

Although the teachers, and their use of power, were influenced by factors such as culture, positionality, and the discourse of professionalism, they nevertheless exerted power in multiple situations and in effective ways. An image that portrays the teachers' perceptions and use of power is a continuum. At one end of the continuum, the teachers demonstrated explicit ownership and overt use of power, while at the other end of the continuum, the teachers demonstrated resistance to or denial of power; however, findings

from this study indicate that the teachers accessed and utilized power all along the continuum.

Positive Perceptions and the Teachers' Use of Power

One of the most important, and most surprising, findings of this study for me was the teachers' acceptance and use of power. This may be viewed as one end of the continuum of power which the teachers worked along. For example, the women in this study told stories of exercising power to resist negative influences from peers, family, friends, and even other teachers to become teachers themselves. They did so because, although the women were aware of issues such as the low status and low salaries of teachers, the occupation of teaching enabled them to align their life goals, values, and roles.

Findings such as these both build on and contradict current literature. For example, the women's decision to become teachers in spite of negative images and external forces builds on research that explores the career choices of women, and women teachers, from a non-traditional perspective. For example, research by Smulyan (2004), although acknowledging the social and historical factors which also influence women's decision to teach, finds agency and power in the choice to enter teaching. As Smulyan's (2004) participants, to become teachers, the women in my study "often had to begin by facing their parents', teachers', friends', and their own stereotypes of teachers and their contrasting expectations of what it meant to be 'smart' and 'successful' women…These women resisted the idea that teaching as a 'female profession' is nonagentic; they saw

themselves as strong, positive social and sometimes political actors" (p. 523). Although few of the teachers in my study would describe themselves as political, they all believed in their agency as individuals and as teachers; they all exerted power and resistance to become teachers; and they all felt that they gained greater power and control over their lives through the occupation of teaching.

They felt this way because through their choice to teach, they balanced their personal and professional goals. This idea further builds on literature concerning women's occupational choices. Eccles (1994) found that women who are able to integrate and "balance one's occupational behaviors with one's other life roles" (p. 605) often experience greater quality of life. This was the case for the women in this study and was specifically illustrated by the second career teachers who spent fewer hours at work, more time with family, felt more positive about the altruistic aspects of their job, and experienced greater health after their move to teaching.

These findings also contradict some educational literature, specifically literature that focuses solely on teachers and their occupation as powerless. This literature often connects the low status of teachers and powerlessness (see Acker, 1995; Benson & Malone, 1987; Isherwood & Hoy, 1973; Webb & Ashton, 1987); however, the participants in my study, although aware of and sometimes frustrated by the low status of teachers, did not believe that such status left them powerless. On the contrary, they resisted external influences that framed their choice to teach as powerless and could cite specific reasons why they exerted power to become teachers and how their choice was powerful. Such findings contradict the image of teaching as merely sacrificial "women's

work" (Acker, 1995; Apple, 1985; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Hargreaves, A., 1994) and provide an alternate lens with which to view the choice to teach.

The women's positive perceptions and use of power appeared to be influenced both by the culture in which they were located and the discourse of professionalism which worked within and was reinforced by the culture. For example, though the women in this study acknowledged and resisted some negative images associated with teaching, because teaching was viewed as "women's work" (Acker, 1995; Apple, 1985; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Hargreaves, A., 1994) in both the culture in which the participants were located and by the discourse of professionalism which pervaded that culture, the exertion of overt power by the women to attain such an occupational role was acceptable.

More specifically, Cannella (1997) writes that because the discourse of professionalism is based upon a patriarchal structure, it reinforces patriarchal assumptions such as the idea of teaching as women's work. In doing so, the discourse of professionalism, rather than increasing the status, wages, and autonomy of women teachers, has actually served to increase control over women teachers and maintain, or decrease, their status, wages, and autonomy. In this study, the combination of the women's positive perceptions and exertion of power and factors such as culture and the discourse of professionalism set up a seemingly double-edged sword for the women. That is, the forces – in both the culture and discourse of professionalism – that encouraged their use of power to enter the teaching force then proceeded to limit their power and behavior once the women became teachers. This is indicated in teachers'

negative perceptions of and reluctance to access power, which would be seen as the opposite end of the continuum.

Negative Perceptions and the Teachers' Use of Power

Contradictory to the stories and experiences the teachers shared about seeking and utilizing power were the teachers' perspectives and actions which conveyed their reluctance to access power. For example, through our discussions, the majority of teachers in this study demonstrated negative perceptions of the power offered through teacher unions and union activities. Findings indicate that although all of the teachers in this study believed that unions held the greatest potential power for teachers, the majority of the participants did not actively participate in a teachers' union, did not garner power from or exercise power through unions, and were generally apathetic in regard to learning about unions or contributing to teacher power through unions. However, findings also indicate that the teachers would access this power, in spite of negative perceptions, if they perceived circumstances to be dire enough.

Findings such as these also build on and contradict current literature. For example, the teachers' perceptions of unions relate to the idea of teacher conservatism presented in the literature. Lightfoot (1983) reports that "throughout the literature, teachers are described as basically conservative – personally, politically, and professionally" (p. 243). Accounting for this conservative image, Lortie (1975) claims that mostly conservative women are attracted to the field of education. He also points to a characteristic of such conservatism that may affect teachers' reluctance to access power

– preference toward the status quo. Lightfoot (1983) also believes that this characteristic affects teachers' use of power, writing, "For the most part, they [individuals attracted to teaching] identify with traditional views and rarely confront opposing perspectives that may challenge the system" (p. 244). The teachers in my study identified such conservatism within themselves and I believe their conservatism was directly related to their negative perception of activism and unions. This negative perception influenced the teachers' resistance to accessing power through unions.

These findings also contradict some educational literature, specifically literature which suggests that unions are a primary source of power for teachers. Carlson (1987) writes that teachers' use of collective force through unions has historically been the best source of power for teachers making changes in their professional welfare and he sees unions as the best vehicle for continued power for teachers. Further, Cooper and Liotta (2001) assert that unions are not only a primary source of power for teachers, but that unions have become "critical actors in the life of the city and the school systems in which they operate" (p. 101). Although the teachers in my study viewed unions as a great *potential* source of power for teachers, the majority of the teachers did not access this power or actively participate in their unions. Thus, teacher unions were not a primary source of power for these teachers. Such findings suggest that rather than continuing to view unions as a source of power for teachers, we should reexamine teachers' perspectives of teacher unions. Further, it appears that if unions want to remain, or in some instances become, a primary source of power for teachers, changes may need to be made in both the image and activities of unions.

The teachers' negative perceptions of and reluctance to access certain forms or sources of power also appeared to be influenced by the culture in which they were located and the discourse of professionalism. For example, the teachers' reluctance to access the power offered through unions seemed to be influenced both by the negative perceptions of unions in their community culture and by the very contradiction between unions and the discourse of professionalism. To elaborate, the Phase I participants were located in Texas, a state in which teacher unions are viewed with suspect and are not granted the right to represent teachers in collective bargaining due to the fear that if teacher unions gain power, they may strike (see minutes from the Texas House Urban Affairs Committee, July 10, 2002). Such perceptions pervaded the culture in which these women were located and, thus, for the women to maintain their positionality as good teachers, they could join a union for liability purposes, as indicated by the teachers' statements in focus groups, but should not actively participate in or access power through unions. Conversely, the participants discussed other organizations, such as their churches or the Junior League, through which they did actively participate in and exert power. Unlike unions, these other organizations were seen as appropriate, socially-sanctioned sources of power for the women in this culture.

Further, the very contradiction between unions and the discourse of professionalism which permeated and was reinforced by the culture also influenced the teachers' perceptions of and activity in unions. For example, the very idea of teaching as a profession conflicts with the existence of teacher unions, since other professions, such as the medical profession, do not have teacher unions; actually, unions have traditionally

been tied to the working class (Carlson, 1987). Further, the historically militant tactics utilized by teacher unions oppose the discourse of professionalism for teachers which indicates that "exhibiting power or disagreeing is unprofessional" (Cannella, 1997, p. 145). Ironically, as previously eluded to, the teachers would access and exert power even through unions, if necessary.

For example, when Leslie, a teacher from Phase II, lost her teaching job, she contacted her union president for help and representation. Though Leslie had not actively participated in or accessed power through her union previously, when she perceived circumstances to be serious enough, she both tapped and overtly exercised power through her union, regardless of her reluctance to do in the past. Such actions demonstrated that, in spite of their negative perceptions and the negative perceptions of the culture surrounding them, these teachers knew how to and would access even controversial forms of power when necessary. This is an important finding because it clearly illustrates that the teachers had entry to and knowledge of how to access power all along the continuum and that the teachers made choices about which power to access depending on the context, demands, and what they knew worked. The teachers' negotiations with their principal for power may be seen somewhere in the middle of this continuum.

Middle Ground and the Teachers' Use of Power

Aware that power exists for and is utilized by teachers, the women in this study also sought to negotiate power with others. Findings indicate that the teachers actively instigated negotiations in order to exert, garner, or combine power with, most often,

principals; that the school environment, whether collaborative or stifling and influenced by the principal, affected such negotiations; and that although the teachers sometimes experienced increased power, they also experienced diminished power due to such negotiations. Although it would be easy and readily accepted to say that the principals actually held power which they used to "empower" the teachers, it appeared in this study that both the teachers and the principals held power, though both experienced fluctuations in power through negotiations.

Findings such as these build on the literature which recognizes a reciprocal relationship between teachers and principals and also the literature which discusses collaborative school environments. Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) describe an "informal system of exchange of favors" (p. 509) between teachers and principals in which "teachers are willing to cooperate with the principal's initiatives" (p. 509) in exchange for power over issues such as schedules and curriculum. This was illustrated specifically by the teachers in Phase I of my study who exerted power to alter a proposed class schedule, but who cooperated with the principal's decision to not allow flexible work hours. Additionally, several of the teachers in this study, including all of the teachers from Phase I, experienced at least some components of a collaborative school environment. Short and Rinehart (1993) describe a collaborative school environment as one in which the principal as leader does not retain all the power, but helps to create an environment where teachers "have the power to identify problems, institute change efforts, and, ultimately, be responsible for organizational outcomes" (p. 596). Although it was unclear in my study how often the teachers actually held responsibility for school

outcomes, it was apparent that the teachers were able to identify issues, offer various solutions, and sometimes implement these solutions. What is also clear from my study is that in such collaborative school environments, the teachers were happier – feeling more in control of their professional situations and more productive. Such findings reinforce the current push to create collaborative school environments (Short & Rinehart, 1993).

These findings also contradict some educational literature, specifically the literature which focuses on principals "empowering" teachers (Gonzales & Short, 1996; Schulz & Teddlie, 1989; Short & Johnson, 1994; Short and Rinehart, 1993). This literature solely concentrates on principals' power and does not acknowledge that teachers have power. In fact, it appears to suggest that without empowerment from principals, teachers are powerless. For example, while Gonzales and Short (1996) address teachers' perceptions of principal power, they do not acknowledge or even entertain the idea that teachers already have power and that they bring this power into their relationships with principals. I do agree with Gonzales and Short (1996) who assert, "The notion that as teachers become more empowered principals lose power simply may be incorrect" (para. 20); however, findings from my study lead me to believe that when power negotiations occur between teachers and principals, both parties experience fluctuations in power. Further research would need to be conducted to substantiate my claim; however, I believe it is an important perspective to recognize and explore.

The teachers' behavior in these power negotiations also appeared to be influenced by the culture, specifically the institutional, or school, culture, in which they were located and the discourse of professionalism. For example, as previously indicated, the teachers

in this study who experienced a collaborative school culture, specifically the teachers from Phase I, were aware of and utilized a process to garner and exert power with their principal. Carol, a teacher from Phase I, recounted a process of presenting the problem to the principal as a teaching team, then emailing the principal, then talking with the principal individually, and then supplying the principal with further written documentation all in an effort to change one situation. Though this process may appear redundant and demeaning to many individuals, these teachers had knowledge of the protocol and steps to take to access and exercise power in their school culture and they were successful. The facts that the teachers had to remain rational in the face of this extended process and that they had to receive permission to make curricular changes from their principal rather than proceed based upon their knowledge and expertise relates to the discourse of professionalism which states that teachers should be rational actors (Dillabough, 1999) and which places teachers' ability to implement technical, standardized curriculum above teachers' knowledge and expertise.

Time and again, I return to the realization that it would be easy to view the teachers in this study as non-agentic, as acted upon by external forces, and as inconsistent in their perceptions of and use of power. However, I believe that the data and findings of this study, as well as the interpretations that emerged from them, shed light on some unique and important understandings about these teachers and their power.

What this Study Teaches Us about these Teachers and their Power

The teachers in this study were aware that various forms and sources of power exist for teachers and they made choices about when, how, and why to access or resist power. These choices were based upon the context of the situation and were influenced by both the community and institutional culture in which the teachers were located and their positionality in these cultures, as well as were influenced by factors such as the discourse of professionalism. For example, the teachers in this study acknowledged both that they had power and that other individuals, mainly their principals, also had, sometimes greater, power. Because of this knowledge, the teachers chose to enter into negotiations with their principals, or other administrators, to exert, garner, or combine power to advocate for themselves, other teachers, and their students. These negotiations were based upon the school culture, the teachers' knowledge of the protocol and steps to take to garner power within this culture, and past experiences with their principal.

Unique and important in this study is that the teachers both acknowledged and exercised power for themselves and other teachers in order to garner greater power and control over their personal and professional situations. This idea departs from the pervasive notion of teacher powerlessness, and the multitude of literature which reports on and discusses this notion (Acker, 1995; Benson & Malone, 1987; Isherwood & Hoy, 1973; Webb & Ashton, 1987). In fact, I believe the teachers' stories and use of power are an significant addition to the educational literature. These stories both answer a call by researchers such as Nias (1996) and Noddings (1996) for the inclusion of teacher stories

in educational literature and provide an unseen, or rarely documented, view of teachers as powerful individuals.

Probably the most important insight this study gives us about the participants is that they had sophisticated knowledge of their culture, many strategies to draw upon, and a canny knowledge of which strategies to use to access and exert power. Further, the teachers in this study accessed and exercised power in multiple forms and from multiple sources to benefit both their students and themselves. In fact, these teachers had developed ways to use power that not only enabled them to address perceived needs or wants, but also to maintain collegial relationships with other teachers and administrators and to create an image of themselves as capable, effective teachers. These ideas contradict much of the educational literature, such as literature that discusses teachers as maternal and self-sacrificing (Acker, 1995; Hargreaves, A., 1994; Grumet, 1988), and introduce us to a view of teachers as individuals with knowledge and insight into the factors at work around them, as individuals already holding power and having access to multiple forms of power, and as individuals who make choices about the power they garner and exert based upon a variety of factors.

Significance and Implications for the Field

I believe that this dissertation answers a call by Rubin and Melnick (2004) who write, "…At a time when misinformation is the official language of the land, it becomes particularly important for teachers to speak and write clearly and truthfully about the things that matter and how they got that way" (p. 2). Although Rubin and Melnick

(2004) do not specifically refer to teacher advocacy in this call, they do cite issues such teacher unions, management issues inside and outside the classroom, and "the question of how teachers have been situated, historically, in the larger context of labor in the United States, and what they can (or should) do from that position" (p. 3). A common and key element in many of the topics presented by Rubin and Melnick (2004) is teacher power.

This dissertation, first, provides a new lens with which to view teacher power. This study departs from literature characterized by a narrow view of teachers as powerless or teachers as powerful and instead accepts and illustrates the multi-dimensional reality of teachers' power. Especially important are the teachers' own stories – their own truths – of power related in this dissertation that help to address a gap in the educational literature that often depicts teachers as powerless. Although the teachers in this study did experience powerlessness, and those stories are also addressed in this dissertation, it is the abilities of the teachers, their awareness of their professional situations, and the often effective and appropriate actions they take in response to their situations that are significant and rarely seen elsewhere.

Additionally, this study adds to a growing body of research interested in "the subjective reality of teachers from the standpoint of, or in the words of, teachers themselves" (Nias, 1989, p. 19). I have used the teachers' words as often as possible to convey their experiences, perspectives, and understandings. Many times, I present several similar quotes or stories from different teachers; though this may seem redundant, I believe it creates a layered synchronization of voices and experiences. At other times I present several contradictory quotes or stories which create a cacophony voices and

experiences. In doing so, this dissertation became one medium through which the teachers in this study voiced their truth about "about the things that matter and how they got that way" (Rubin & Melnick, 2004, p. 2).

However, I believe that it is the implication of this dissertation for teacher education that is most significant. Specifically, I believe this study compels us, as teacher educators, to answer the question, how can we engage preservice teachers, meaning those students enrolled in teacher education programs, and inservice teachers, referring to those individuals employed in an elementary teaching position, with these notions of power? Below, I offer several suggestions.

Teacher Education: Exploring Notions of Power

Most importantly, teacher educators must incorporate topics related to teacher power throughout preservice and inservice teacher education programs. Specifically, I suggest explicit use of terms such as power, advocacy, activism, discourse of professionalism, and culture or context. General discomfort with the majority of these words, especially the word power, in education has too often kept them out of important and necessary discussions.

Negative perceptions associated with power have been at work in education for decades. For example, in 1972, Rotigel wrote that in education "we seem to attribute evil intent to those with power" (p. 76), while in 2003, McNay wrote of "a general feeling that to have power is somehow inappropriate in education settings" (p. 77). The similarities in these writings suggest that these ideas are well-entrenched in education in

general and in teachers specifically; changing such negative perceptions will involve repeated exploration of these topics in a variety of ways.

Kaufman and McDonald (1995) write of incorporating similar topics into a Master of Arts program which prepares secondary teachers. Specifically, they write of providing their preservice teachers with "discussions and readings focused on professionalism, teacher unions, teachers' lives, women in education, burnout, empowerment, teaching as a political act, bottom-up versus top-down reform, alternative schools, alternatives within public schools, critical pedagogy, and the teacher as researcher" (Kaufman & McDonald, 1995, p. 47). Kaufman and McDonald (1995) believe that such discussions and readings are key in producing and maintaining teachers who are "change agents," teachers who "can critically examine those aspects of schooling that reproduce oppressive and unjust social and political forms" and who make changes in their classrooms and schools in response to these examinations (p. 47). These topics were explored in a seminar which paralleled the students' internship and were met with a variety of responses, including resistance, skepticism, and acceptance, by the students. Additionally, Kaufman and McDonald (1995) report that many of their students left their course having "thought about notions of change for the first time" (p. 50). Building on Kaufman and McDonald's (1995) findings, I suggest that incorporating these topics as early as possible into teacher education programs may produce increased acceptance of ideas such as teacher power or teacher as change agent. Rather than having students think about these topics just before the end of their teacher education program, I would like to see integration and exploration of these topics throughout the teacher education

program. I believe that three current trends in teacher education could support such integration.

The Use of Case Studies

We can first actively engage preservice teachers in exploration of topics related to teacher power through the use of case studies early and throughout the teacher education program. Case studies are "an instructional technique whereby the major ingredients of a problematic teaching situation are presented in narrative form to preservice teachers for the purpose of problem solving" (Dana & Floyd, 1994, p. 1). I suggest the use of case studies because they can be used early in teacher education programs as "an alternative to learning in the field" (Jay, 2004, p. 35), so that even in introductory education courses, preservice teachers can engage with the complex situations and topics which cases often present. Regarding the topic of teacher power and the related topics mentioned above, Wasserman's (1994) assessment of student learning through cases illustrates why I believe that cases are an appropriate teaching tool to explore such heated and complicated issues. She writes:

> Students who study educational issues through case narratives learn to envision teaching as a series of complex situations that are in a state of constant flux. They learn how to draw out meanings and to free themselves from unwarranted assumptions, from sweeping generalizations, and from facile conclusions. They learn how we all filter what we see and hear through our own built-in lenses of personal reference. They learn to become more critical, more thoughtful, more

> intelligent meaning makers, exchanging simplistic judgments for suspended judgment (Wasserman, 1994, para.25).

Educational case studies are now available in educational research (for example, see Foucar-Szocki, 1994) as well in textbook form (for example, see Kauffman, Mostert, Trent, & Hallahan, 2002). Additionally, cases can be written by preservice teachers as they engage in field experiences observing and teaching in elementary classrooms and also by inservice teachers.

For example, inservice teachers may write such cases during a specified professional development day in which teachers are guided by, for example, an instructor from a teacher education program or inservice teachers may write cases on a more consistent basis as a means of collaboration and professional development, as documented in the work of Richards and Barksdale-Ladd (1997). Further, as inservice teachers look to become "highly qualified" as stated in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and to gain continuing education credits as required by many states to renew teaching certificates (for example, see the Louisiana Department of Education), they may be encouraged to enroll in courses in a college of education which incorporate instructional methods such as case studies and which actively engage teachers in exploring notions of power through other methods, such as reflection.

The Use of Reflection

Second, I believe teacher education programs can engage preservice and inservice teachers in exploring topics related to teacher power through reflection. The concept of

reflection has received much attention in teacher education literature recently (see Adler, 1991; Bean & Stevens, 2002; Dobbins, 1996; Spalding & Wilson, 2002) and is even listed as a standard for elementary teachers by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (see the Association for Childhood Education International, www.acei.org). Reflection is defined as the "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the ground that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1933, in Spalding & Wilson, 2002, p. 1394) and is often utilized in preservice teacher education in the form of reflective journals that accompany field experiences or student teaching. I believe that incorporating topics related to teacher power through reflective writing during such field experiences is especially important due the power issues that often arise during these experiences.

Teacher education candidates often report that field experiences such as student teaching are the most influential part of their teacher education program (Bunting, 1988; Graham, 1999); within these experiences, teacher educators, practicing teachers, and preservice teachers are very aware of not only the power relations that exist, but also the power differentials (Ritchie, Rigano, & Lowry, 2000). It is clear in the literature, and most teacher educators will concur, that teacher education programs most often assume the role of peacekeeper, "maintaining good relationships between the university and area schools" (McCall, 1996, p. 147). By situating themselves as such peacekeepers, teacher education programs have relinquished their ability to act as facilitator, guide, and teacher in the power relations between teacher educator, cooperating teacher, and preservice

teacher. Instead, it appears that the actions, or inactions, of teacher education programs have consistently resulted in powerlessness for preservice teachers and power for cooperating teachers and university supervisors. For example, Ritchie, et al. (2000) write that "student teachers appear to be at the bottom end of a power differential with their school-based supervising teachers and university-based teacher educators" (p. 165). I believe that such inconsistent messages about teacher power and such socialization upon entry into teaching may contribute to teacher ambivalence about power. Further, I believe that it falls to teacher education programs to remedy this situation.

McNay (2003) reports that while cooperating teachers deny they have power over the student teachers in their classrooms and are "reluctant to talk about power at all," student teachers are "acutely aware of the power resting with the" cooperating teacher (p. 75). The student teachers call this "'playing the game'" and see it "as necessary for success" (McNay, 2003, p. 76). I believe that teacher educators can use methods such as reflective journals to explore with both their preservice teachers and the cooperating inservice teachers these issues of power. Dobbins (1996) finds power and control central in reflection and writes, "Reflection is encouraged in the practicum because it is seen as a way for student teachers to take control over their own learning, and consequently it is seen as an 'empowering' process…[student teachers] need to be empowered to think and learn for themselves, rather than being powerless and dependent on the institution" (para. 6). Still, it is up to teacher educators to introduce, model, and scaffold the reflective process (Bean & Stevens, 2002). In such, I believe it is imperative for teacher educators

to explore and reflect upon issues related to teacher power before, during, and after working with their students and other teachers to examine such topics.

Additionally, inservice teachers may be encouraged to engage in active reflection of issues related to teacher power through a variety of means. For example, a current trend in inservice teacher professional development is teacher led study groups (see Birchak et. al., 1998; Ediger, 2003; Fishbaugh & Hecimovic, 1994; Jones, 1997; Roberts, 2003). In these study groups, teachers "take a more active role in their professional development, both in its planning and delivery" (Jones, 1997, p. 3). These groups take many forms, including, but not limited to, instructional practice groups, professional book study groups, mentorship groups, and National Board for Professional Teaching Standards groups, whose members are seeking National Board certification (Roberts, 2003). I believe that each of these types of groups avails itself to teachers actively engaging in notions of power. For example, through collaboration with an area college of education, teachers in professional book study groups may be provided title of books which incorporate issues of power or through the leadership of a mentor teacher, teachers in a mentorship group may be led to explore issues related to teacher power. From my own study, I found that inservice teachers are willing to discuss and explore issues of power when these topics arise or are brought to them.

The Use of Action Research

Third, I believe that teacher education programs can facilitate the active engagement of preservice and inservice teachers in exploring notions of power through

action research. Action research in one form or another has been used in teacher education for most of this century (Lederman & Niess, 1997) and has been described as "a vehicle for encouraging reflective teaching practice" (Liston & Zeichner, 1990, para. 27). Reflective practice

> implies reflexivity: self awareness. But such an awareness brings with it insights into the ways in which the self in action is shared and constrained by institutional structures. Self awareness and awareness of the institutional context of one's work as a teacher are not developed by separate cognitive processes: reflexive, and objective analysis. Reflexive practice necessarily implies both self-critique and institutional critique. One cannot have one without the other" (Elliot, 1988, in Liston & Zeichner, 1990, para. 24).

These ideas resonate with teachers' active engagement with notions of power and the need to explore both individual and institutional influences on power.

Action research involves planning, acting, observing, and reflecting often in a cycle (Liston & Zeichner, 1990); however, Lederman and Niess (1997) caution that action research should be a rigorous form of educational research, lest preservice and inservice teachers involved in action research be left with the notion that educational research is less valid than other forms of research. Within action research is the idea of teacher as change agent (Price & Valli, 2005); as such, teachers involved in action research form a strategic plan to change a practice or even social context. About this, Price and Valli (2005) write, "Action research has the potential to effect change in (a) individual teacher development and the quality of teaching, (b) the control of teaching

knowledge, (c) the institutional context, and (d) the broader social context" (p. 58). Again, these ideas lend themselves to preservice and inservice teachers engaging with notions of power.

It behooves me at this moment to state again that teacher educators must engage with notions of power within teacher education programs and within academic departments before, during, and after working with preservice and inservice teachers. Many of the methods that I have listed previously are tools which teacher educators could themselves use to explore concepts related to teacher power. For example, Wildman, Hable, Preston, and Magliaro (2000) write about faculty study groups, similar to teacher led study groups. These groups faculty members "joined[ed] with colleagues to build a process of reflection and inquiry, advance their own teaching, and contribute to teaching effectiveness campus-wide" through "deep, routine study of and reflection upon their teaching" (Wildman, et. al., 2000, p. 248). I believe that these types of faculty-led groups, focused on critical reflection and inquiry, are an ideal method for exploring notions of power in teaching. Wildman, et. al. (2000) write that the participants in their faculty study groups reported that the groups were a positive experience, that they facilitated collaboration with other faculty and "relief from the isolation of teaching," (p. 260) and that the group's "recognition and validation of the importance of their own experience provided them with the confidence to share their concerns, interests, and successes within the group and, more importantly, to try new ideas in their classrooms" (p. 258). Such findings offer us insight into the methods that we can use as teacher

educators within our own departments, colleges, and universities to explore notions of power in teaching.

Limitations of the Findings

I have tried to throughout this dissertation make it very clear that the findings from this study were never intended to, nor should they be generalized to any population beyond the focus groups (Flores & Alonso, 1995; Fontana & Frey, 2000). The findings of this study are limited by the participant population, as well as the study methodology.

First, the participant population chosen for this study was specific and limited. Each focus group consisted of elementary teachers who were white, female, and middle class. Though these characteristics represent the majority of elementary teachers in the field (National Education Association, 1997), they certainly do not represent all elementary teachers, nor do they represent all white, female, middle class elementary teachers. I am certain that significant differences exist among elementary teachers when other factors such college education, teaching location, and previous experiences are taken into consideration. Additionally, some of the teachers in this study were chosen because they were second career teachers, a further limiting characteristic. Though I believe that the homogeneity created in the focus groups established "a safe environment" (Madriz, 2000, p. 835) for participants, I also recognize that such homogeneity not only limits the generalization of the findings, but also could skew the findings due to possible participant conformity, "similar to groupthink" (Panyan et al., 1997, p. 43). This idea is also related to methodological limitations.

Although I feel that the focus groups utilized in this study were greatly beneficial due to the communication and support that they facilitated among the teachers, I also recognize a methodological limitation in how I used the focus groups. This limitation involves the length of the focus groups. Even though the duration of the focus groups was purposefully kept short to accommodate the teachers' hectic schedules, the time allotted for the meetings did not allow for extensive elaboration by any one person. It was obvious in all meetings that the group members consciously made time for each person to speak, thereby sometimes cutting their own remarks short. Therefore, I received broad input from each participant, but in-depth input from none. Each of these limitations informs suggestions for future research.

Suggestions for Future Research

Certainly a variety of additional research suggestions could be drawn from this dissertation; however, I find two areas of possible future research to be both compelling and significant.

First, additional research with the participants from this study would be beneficial. As previously discussed, the length of the focus groups was a limitation of the findings of this dissertation. Therefore, I believe that conducting more in-depth interviews, both individually and in focus groups, with these participants would be valuable. I believe that it would be important in these interviews to not solely focus on teacher advocacy and activism, but also to continue discussions of teacher power, as this was a significant finding of this study. Additional interview questions should be created

that would further explore the teachers' ambivalence toward power and the professionalism of education, including attention to the discourse of professionalism. Such questions may include: why does the power offered by unions hold a negative connotation? What does being a professional mean to you? Further exploration into these topics holds significance for practicing teachers, teacher educators, and preservice teachers. As well, it would be important to observe the teachers at work in their classrooms, at team and faculty meetings, in the staff rooms, etc. as such observations would allow for the triangulation of data.

Second, additional focus groups with other elementary teachers concerning the topics of teacher power, teacher advocacy and activism, and the professionalism of education would be beneficial. Also cited as a limitation to this study was the make-up of the focus groups; therefore, focus groups of elementary teachers in different locations, of different races, gender, and socioeconomic status would be valuable. However, additional research with elementary teachers similar to the women in this study would also be valuable. A statement by Maureen illustrates why additional focus groups with various teachers would be valuable; she said, "…There's a control issue…Right now, teachers are pretty cheap labor. They're stuck in the classrooms and if you let everybody start talking to each other…" (2003, Int. 3, 257-260). Maureen was unable to finish her statement, unsure of what would happen if teachers communicated with each other. What is clear from both Maureen's statement and from this dissertation is that when teachers do come together, they share significant ideas, stories, and experiences; they

raise tough, important questions and topics; and they have valuable insights and meanings to provide each other and the field.

Closing

Before closing this dissertation, I take a moment to pause and ponder the current educational situation in the United States and the massive external forces at work upon schools and teachers. Specifically, I wonder how these external forces will affect teachers' use of power. The external forces are numerous, but I will focus on two here. The first of these are the high-stakes standardized tests being implemented at multiple school grades and the highly structured curricula that are mandated by school districts for teachers to implement to prepare students for such standardized tests. For example, specific to this study, in Texas, state standardized tests, called the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), are administered as follows: reading tests are administered in Grades 3-9; mathematics tests in Grades 3-11; writing in Grades 4 and 7; science in Grades 5,10, and 11; social studies in Grades 8, 10, and 11; and English Language Arts in Grades 10 and 11. Additionally, students must pass the TAKS at Grade 11 to receive a high school diploma (Texas Education Agency). To prepare students for these tests, teachers are expected to implement highly structured curriculum based upon the Texas Essential Skills and Knowledge (TEKS), which are correlated with the TAKS tests, and in some districts, such as the Austin Independent School District, to also implement benchmark tests throughout the school year to assess which students are ready for the state standardized tests and which students need remediation. Beyond just

replacing large amounts of teaching time with testing and test preparation, these standardized tests and curriculum seem to disregard the individual learning and cultural needs of students, as well as the knowledge and expertise of teachers. On the contrary, as other educational researchers, I believe that these measures by our national government, state legislatures, and local school districts serve to both deskill (Acker, XXXX) and control (Cannella, 1997) teachers through increased bureaucracy and intensification of teachers' work.

The second, and somewhat related, external force at work upon education and teachers specifically are increased standards and testing for teachers themselves. The list of organizations and bodies which are creating and implementing these standards are almost endless. To name a few, nationally there is the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), while states have developed their own teaching standards. For example, again specific to this study, in Louisiana, teachers must pass several parts of the PRAXIS standardized test before becoming certified. Additionally, as first year teachers, Louisiana teachers must also take part in the Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program (LATAAP) in which they are observed and assessed by multiple individuals utilizing the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching. Experienced teachers in Louisiana are also assessed using the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching and are currently highly encouraged to attain National Board Certification (NBC) through the NBPTS. The

amount of time, effort, and money put into realizing each of these standards by teachers is dizzying. For example, to become Nationally Board Certified takes approximately 200-400 hours of work in a year (Connecticut Education Association, www.cea.org) and certification costs $2,300 (NBPTS, www.nbpts.org). It is easy to see that such external forces constrain not only teachers' ability to devote time and energy to their students and classrooms, but also even their financial resources.

Why do I present these external factors? Again, I wonder how these external forces will affect teachers' use of power. The teachers in my study garnered and accessed multiple forms of power depending on the context of the situation and other factors, such as the discourse of professionalism. Though the teachers mainly acted within the acceptable and expected roles created for them by their community and institution, or school, culture and by the discourse of professionalism, they were willing to step outside of acceptable roles and behaviors to access and exercise power when they perceived the situation to be dire enough or the need great enough. For example, Leslie, as teacher in Phase II, utilized her union, in spite of negative perceptions surrounding teacher unions and their activities, when she lost her teaching job. And Carol, a teacher in Phase I, choose to engage in "activist" type activities, again in spite of negative perceptions surrounding activists and their activities, when she felt that proposed social security legislation was going to directly, negatively affect her personal benefits. My question then is will the external forces currently at work upon schools and teachers drive teachers to access more and varied forms of power to affect change in the current educational situation? The actions of the teachers in my study lead me to believe that

rather than continually accepting greater control over themselves and their work, teachers will choose to at some point exert their power to push back or change these external forces. Only time will tell what will happen for sure, but I believe it is a question worth pursuing through additional research and individual action.

In closing, this study examined and relayed the stories, ideas, and experiences of seven elementary teachers who came together in two focus groups to explore their perceptions of teacher advocacy for themselves and other teachers. Such stories address a gap in the literature cited by researchers such as Nias (1996) and Noddings (1996), who argue for including teacher stories in educational research in general and in teacher education literature specifically. This dissertation has implications for practicing teachers, teacher educators, and preservice teachers, as well as educational researchers.

Significant study findings, which emerged from the participants' words (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Nias, 1989), indicate the teachers held ambivalence toward power, which was influenced by both the community and institutional culture in which the teachers were located and the discourse of professionalism. The uneasy and inconsistent relationship the teachers had with power directly influenced their advocacy actions on behalf of themselves and other teachers. Though at times the teachers were reluctant to access certain forms of power, often due to negative perceptions of that power, they also held positive perceptions of and exercised power for themselves and other teachers. It is the teachers' acceptance and use of power – their abilities, awareness of their professional situations, and the often effective and appropriate actions they take in response to their situations – conveyed in this dissertation that are rarely seen elsewhere and, thus, are

valuable, not to be shelved and lost, but to be built upon by future researchers and teachers.

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